CAROLINGIAN IMPERIAL AUTHORITY:

CONSOLIDATION TO DISSOLUTION, 751-870

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by

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CAROLINGIAN IMPERIAL AUTHORITY:
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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Lois Huneycutt

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Barbara Wallach

To my loving and supportive wife, Courtney,

without whom I would have in no way been able to complete

this project much less pursue my career.

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I further owe a great deal of gratitude to my undergraduate mentor, Dr. Allen Jones, whose support and advice made my academic career possible and whose historiography class first sparked my interest in Carolingian history. Finally, the many conversations with my colleagues in Read Hall basement and writing group have enabled me to work through many drafts of this work and gain a more critical perspective of my own research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MGH: *Cap.*   *Monumenta Germaniae Historica:*   *Capitularia*

       Conc.   *Concilia*

       DD Kar.   *Diplomata Karolinorum*

       DD Merov.   *Diplomata Merovingicarum*

       Epp.   *Epistolae*

       SS   *Scriptores*

       SSRG   *Scriptores in usum scholarum*

       SSRL   *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

Following the dissolution of the Roman Empire in the west, Germanic peoples moved into the former Roman provinces and established their own kingdoms. The grand narrative of early medieval history has centered on the Franks, who were by far the most successful Germanic people to lay claim to their Roman inheritance. The problems for Germanic kings, like Clovis, were their continued use of partible inheritance and lack of centralized power beyond the reign of a single charismatic king. When Merovingian kings died, they left their realms to multiple heirs, splitting up any consolidation that may have been achieved under their watch. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that Germanic loyalties were personal and tied to individual leaders. The Carolingians, however, sought to deal with the problems (i.e. constant internecine warfare) that resulted from partible inheritance. Beginning under Charlemagne, they embarked on an extensive reform of the administration and attempted to exert royal control throughout the Frankish realm. Ultimately, however, it was the use of the new imperial authority that Carolingian rulers used to consolidate power and authority.

The issue of the imperial nature of the Carolingian realm has been a matter of debate among modern historians since the nineteenth century. Scholars, such as F.L. Ganshof and Heinrich Fichtenau, were pioneers in studying the Carolingian empire, examining the influence of the imperial title through the capitulary and narrative evidence.[1] More recent scholarship has begun to question the imperial nature of the Carolingian realm. Rosamond McKitterick and Mayke de Jong have both voiced concern with the imperialist view. McKitterick has questioned

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[1] See Heinrich Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire*, trans. by Peter Munz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Francois Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne*, trans. by Byrce and Mary Lyon (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968); Ganshof, F.L., *The Carolingian and Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. by Janet Sondheimer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971).

the lay magnates' support of the imperial ideal, as embodied by the *Ordinatio Imperii* (817), by arguing that there is no evidence of any connection between the document and the magnates.[2] The *Ordinatio* officially gave Louis the Pious' eldest son, Lothar, the majority of the Frankish lands and made his other sons subject to their eldest brother. This document seriously broke with the Carolingian tradition of partible inheritance. It also embodied the imperial ideal, which was the ideal of extending consolidated power beyond the reign of one ruler. Louis the Pious, who upheld this ideal, attempted through the *Ordinatio* to solidify and consolidate the power of the Carolingian empire under one heir rather than multiple. De Jong though has questioned the imperial intent of the *Ordinatio* itself, arguing that it resembles previous documents, like the *Divisio Regnorum*, that espoused partible inheritance. Scholars like McKitterick and De Jong highlighted the self-interest of magnates as a stumbling block for the dissemination of the imperial mindset below the Carolingian family itself. Rather than operating on the new idea of empire, magnates continued to operate through the same kinship networks and localized concerns in which they always had.

The Carolingians definitely forged an empire. Powerful and charismatic leaders like Charlemagne were able to impose control over the autonomous regions of Francia and forced these regions to work together. However, this control was often tenuous.[3] The regionalism that prospered because of the tradition of subkingdoms was at the core of Frankish society, and the cooperation of regions was in a constant state of flux. McKitterick has argued that because of this regionalism, Frankish magnates never accepted the imperial nature that the *Ordinatio*

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[2] Rosamond McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians 751-987* (Burnt Mill, UK: Longman Group Limited, 1983), 170-171.

[3] The fact that I use Charlemagne rather than simply Charles is telling. Charlemagne was deserving of his epithet, having consolidated the power of the Carolingian kinship. Furthermore, without Charlemagne, imperial aspirations and the massive expansion of the realm like did not occur. Lastly, the use of "Charlemagne" is not far removed from his lifetime.

advocated. She claims that magnates were nothing more than self-interested and as an example

of this self-interest she cites how they used Lothar and his brothers to rebel against Louis the

Pious. Ganshof, however, has claimed that *Ordinatio*, and thus the imperial ideal, had a great

number of supporters, many of whom were clerics and lay magnates who stood to gain from an

united realm.[4] Ganshof also acknowledges that there were also many opposed to the imperialist

ideal, like Louis the Pious' sons, Pepin and Louis the German.[5]

Proponents of both sides of this debate over the extent to which magnates and others

ever supported the idea of imperial unity rely somewhat on speculation. There is no way to

prove definitively that those who rebelled against Louis the Pious did so out of support for the

imperial unity that he threatened in 829.[6] However, it is creating a false dichotomy to claim that

self-interested magnates could not also be imperialists. Considering recent scholarship, this

thesis reexamines the capitulary, charter, numismatic, and narrative evidence of the Carolingian

realm in order to understand the development of the imperial status of the Carolingian realm.

Through this evidence we can see not only the increased use of the imperial title, but also the

consolidation of titles used by the Carolingians. The consolidation represents the Carolingian

emphasis on the new imperial authority and the unity that it embodied. It is this imperial

authority that endures multiple divisions of the Carolingian empire and continuous internal

hostilities to be coveted well into the late ninth century.

This thesis directly deals with the issue of imperial authority and power in the

Carolingian realm. However, it also addresses other issues, including the poor representation of

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[4] F.L. Ganshof, *The Carolingian and Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. by Janet Sondheimer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 176.

[5] Ibid, 180. For more on Louis the German, see Eric J. Goldberg's *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817-876* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[6] Bernard Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals* in *Carolingian Chronicles* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970), 131. Louis the Pious gave lands to his youngest son, Charles the Bald, after the *Ordinatio Imperii*.

Lothar in modern scholarship. Lothar's reign is effectively the case study for the strength of the imperial title. While many would take this to mean that the imperial ideal was weak because Lothar failed to secure the empire for himself, I argue that Lothar's reign shows that the imperial status of the Carolingians was quite strong. The Carolingians were able to wield great ideological and unifying power through their implementation of the imperial title, and through the person of Lothar, the imperial status of the Carolingian realm was given political reality. The reason for the ultimate failure of the imperial ideal of the Carolingians was not that it was weak and predetermined to fail because it did not fit well with the regionalized realm of the Franks. Instead the Carolingian empire failed because of the onslaught of continual internal problems, beginning with the birth of Charles the Bald and ending with the Treaty of Verdun. The context of these years provides a great understanding of the decline of the Carolingian empire.

Before studying the Carolingian attempts to create an empire, one must first look at the problems they faced when coming to power. The fundamental unit of Frankish society was the kin-group, which ruled the family lands and was the arbiter of justice to and for family members.[7] One responsibility of the kin-group was the blood-feud in which the kin brought wrongdoers to justice on behalf of the wronged family member. Powerful kin-groups dominated Francia, competing with each other for wealth and power. One way to amass considerable wealth and power was through marriage alliances and families often intermarried to keep power within a closed group of warrior elites. The marriage practices of the Merovingians often flew in the face of ecclesiastical expectations for marriage.[8] For instance, despite the church's belief that monogamy was the best option for peace and unity, Merovingians continued to have

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[7] George Holmes, ed., *The Oxford History of Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 77.
[8] Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in the Medieval France* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

multiple wives and concubines. According to Suzanne Wemple, "marriages in the Merovingian period had remained remarkably free from the influence of Christianity."[9] These loose marriage patterns created a multiplicity of potential heirs, which exacerbated tensions and caused disunity. For example, upon Clovis I's death in 511, the kingdom was divided among the four adult sons he had left behind, but these four sons vied among themselves to reunite the properties that had once been a united kingdom. The unity that Clovis had fought for was divided and destroyed instantly upon his death. Not until 613 under Clothar II did Francia become united again under a single ruler.[10] Nearly a century of fighting resulted due to the tendency for multiple sons to inherit. After a brief period of unity and relative internal peace, problems with multiple heirs continued under the Merovingians. Finally, in 751, the Carolingian mayors of the palace replaced the Merovingians. With the Merovingians as a model for turmoil, the Carolingians sought to limit the causes of internecine struggle. Thus, they immediately began passing laws on marriage and adultery, laws that the Church had advocated for a long time. These laws had the effect of cutting down the number of legitimate children, and thus potential heirs, who could potentially claim the kingdom or part of it upon the death of the previous ruler.

Another problem facing the Franks was their inability to recognize and deal with the problems of regionalism and the tradition of subkingdoms that was at the core of Frankish society. This tradition left Germanic kings with the problem of fighting among themselves, an inevitable outcome of partible inheritance, the practice of dividing governance of the realm among heirs. As the Franks began to conquer the surrounding peoples outside of Neustria and Austrasia, the already present problem of factionalism increased. Distinct centers of power,

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[9] Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 75.
[10] Holmes, ed., *Oxford History*, 86.

Neustria and Austrasia constantly vied for dominance during Merovingian times.[11] Add to this the regions of Aquitaine and Burgundy, and the problem of disunity was furthered. Aquitaine would prove problematic even until 768 when Charlemagne quelled the last revolt from there. The Aquitanian aristocracy was descended from the Gallo-Roman aristocracy, and were loath to give up their regional identity. The Frankish political centers of Neustria and Austrasia also had their differences. When Merovingians divided lands, often different heirs took control over new courts and then began to fight each other for dominance. Burgundy became a third court for the Merovingians, but eventually lost out to its northern counterparts. Carolingian expansion through the ninth century added the areas of Bavaria, Italy, the eastern provinces, and the Spanish and Breton marches, but also increased the problems of disunity, factionalism, and regionalism. The problem facing the Franks with their continuously expanding realm was the necessity to hold disparate regions with different cultures, dialects, and political environments together as a part of a united realm.

The self-interest of Carolingian heirs (sons, grandsons, and nephews) was another problem that threatened the solidarity of the Carolingian Empire. Naturally, each potential heir wanted to preserve his own status and increase the territories over which he had control. I will discuss the issue of "self-interest" alongside the tradition of subkingdoms and regionalism, for it fed into this problem. Frankish sons often used the tradition of subkingdoms to set up courts from which to pursue their own interests. However, the thought that self-interest automatically meant divisiveness and internecine conflict is wrong. Sons could be self-interested, even greedy, but still work together.

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[11] See Rosamond McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians: 751-987* (Brunt Mill, UK: Longman Group, 1983), 16-17.

Cooperation among Carolingian sons is evident in the *Royal Frankish Annals*. Following the death of Charles Martel in 741, his two eldest sons, Carloman and Pepin, led forces against Hunald, the rebellious duke of the Aquitanians.[12] In 742, Carloman and Pepin divided the kingdom between themselves at Vieux Poitiers and continued to work together against the rebellion of Odilo, duke of Bavaria, and in the wars against the Saxons. In 746, Carloman decided to leave the secular life for the monastery of Mount Soratte. Pepin certainly benefitted from this decision. However, it is not clear whether he forced it. Carloman had controlled extensive lands ever since the division of Carolingian properties at Vieux Poitiers. It is logical to assume that Carloman would have used these powers and resources if Pepin had tried to have him tonsured against his will. There appears to have been some fraternal cooperation between Charlemagne and Carloman, sons of Pepin the Younger. In 769, Hunald again rebelled against the Franks. The brothers worked together like their father and uncle had in 742. In 771, Carloman died.[13] Although it is possible that Charlemagne was complicit in his brother's death, nevertheless, the brothers had worked together prior to Carloman's death.

What becomes evident in examining these two relationships is that the self-interests of brothers could be achieved cooperatively. Other times the power and resources of the one brother acted as a check on the self-interest of the other. In the case of Charlemagne's possible compliance in his brother's death, it significant that he chose not to engage in open war with his brother. Carloman was a powerful individual and a useful ally. The constant threat of external enemies and internal rebellions also kept brothers in consort with each other, and the Carolingian Empire was never short on external threats. These threats included the Saxons, who

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[12] Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 37. "Carloman and Pepin, mayors of the palace, then led an army against Hunald, duke of the Aquitanians …"

[13] King, P.D., trans. *Royal Frankish Annals* in *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Lancaster: University of Lancaster Press, 1987), 74-75.

rebelled periodically from 743-804, the Lombards in Italy, the eastern peoples, and eventually

the Vikings. Self-interest was an underlying problem, but the fact that brothers could and were

often forced to work together meant that other factors held their self-interest in check.

Finally, the multiplicity of potential heirs was a constant problem for the Franks. This

fact becomes all the clearer when looking at the Merovingians. The plethora of possible heirs,

including legitimate and illegitimate brothers, male cousins, and uncles, created constant

turmoil and division. When the Carolingians came to power, they sought to deal with this issue.

Under Pepin and Charlemagne, new capitularies tackled issues, such as consanguinity, adultery,

and clandestine marriages. These capitularies reflect not only the growing alliance with the

papacy, but also the attempt by the Carolingians to deal with the roots of multiple heirs.

When the Carolingians came to power, they not only faced the same problems of

regionalism and internal pressures that the Merovingian had faced, but they also had to deal

with the persistence of Merovingian support as well as establish legitimacy for their own claims

to power.[14] All of these problems created a perceived need on the part of Carolingian monarchs

to create unity and stability throughout their realm. First and foremost the Carolingians turned

to the church. Allying with the papacy offered legitimacy to their claims as kings of Francia.

Beginning in 751, the papacy became involved with many of the critical moments of

Carolingian history, such as the coronation and anointing of Pepin and his sons. The Franco-

papal alliance would see a convergence of the ideological framework of the Carolingian

government and that of the Christian Church. Out of this convergence, the Carolingians adopted

the idea of an *imperium Christianum*, that is a unified territorial realm administered according

to Christian principles.[15] It is no coincidence that as the Franco-papal alliance deepened,

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[14] McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 50.

[15] For more on the idea of *imperium Christianum*, see Jeffrey Russell, *A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1968), 77-81; Alessandro Barbero,

concerns over unity and centralization deepened as well. During the reigns of Pepin (751-768) and Charlemagne (768-814), the Franks began to see themselves as a part of a wider Christian realm. However, they were not just a part, but more importantly, they sought to establish themseves as the rulers of Christendom. As they conquered new territories and introduced new peoples into the Carolingian kingdom, the concept of a Frankish king no longer suited the new nature of the expanding realm. The Carolingians required a new way to express who they were. The coronation of Charlemagne in December of 800 provided just that. The imperial title provided the Carolingians with the ideological framework to express who they were: rulers over a Christian empire.

The transition from rulers of a kingdom to rulers of a Christian empire is the concern of the first chapter. This chapter will examine the capitulary, charter, and numismatic evidence for the reigns of Pepin, Charlemagne, and Louis the Pious in order to highlight the transition of the Carolingian ruler from *rex Francorum* to *imperator augustus*. The reign of Pepin reveals a ruler concerned with simply establishing himself as king of the Franks. Following his coup in 751, Pepin had to deal with the supporters of the Merovingians. In order to help eliminate Merovingian support and secure the succession of the Carolingians, Pepin and his court continually presented Pepin simply as the *rex Francorum* in his documents. However, by the end of his reign, charters and capitularies included other embellishments, such as *dei gratia*, and coincide with the growing connection between the Carolingians and the papacy.[16] It is that connection that not only provided legitimacy to the Carolingian rule, but also helped present the Carolingians as rulers over a Christian empire.

Charlemagne: Father of a Continent (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 89-92; Owen Phelan, *The Formation of Christian Europe: The Carolingians, Baptism, and the Imperium Christianum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[16] See Idlar Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

During the reign of Charlemagne, we see even more embellishments and a growing number of titles for the Frankish king, such as *rex Langobardorum* and *patricius Romanorum*. These titles are reflective of the expanding realm and a growing awareness of continuity from late antiquity, as well as the emerging idea that the Carolingians ruled over a Christian people. It is also during the reign of Charlemagne that we see a new emphasis on centralizing the realm. The capitulary and numismatic evidence indicates the Charlemagne and his son attempted to concentrate ideological and political power of the realm into royal hands. In 800, this attempt would receive a great boon through the imperial coronation of Charlemagne.[17] Charlemagne began to represent himself not only as the *rex Francorum*, but also the *imperator augustus*. Thus, Charlemagne's reign acts as an abrupt transition from the Carolingians as kings to them as emperors. The imperial title was new to the Carolingian world, and Charlemagne and his court experimented with using it, often coupling it with more established titles in the documentary evidence. By including established and familiar titles with the imperial one, Charlemagne and his court lent legitimacy to the recreated imperial identity. Charlemagne's reign thus is a period of transition for the imperial title. While he coupled it with older titles, his son, Louis the Pious, abandoned other titles.

Charlemagne did not fully understand how to implement the imperial status in inheritance practices. When he divided his kingdom, he used the tradition method of partible inheritance, and yet, the emphasis on unity of the empire in the *Divisio Regnorum* shows that

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[17] For more on the revival of the imperial crown and its purpose see, See Louis Haphen, *Charlemagne et l'empire carolingien* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1947), 181-194; Robert Folz, *Le Couronnement imperial de Charlemagne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 157-177; Ganshof, F.L., *The Carolingian and Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. by Janet Sondheimer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 41-54; Jeffrey Russell, *A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1968), 77-81; Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 89-92. Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 160-169.

ideas about empire and unity were percolating post-coronation. Though Charlemagne did not fully implement the imperial status, his son did. Merely three years after receiving the imperial designation himself, Louis the Pious crowned his son Lothar I co-emperor. He further gave Lothar a majority of the Frankish lands in the *Ordinatio*. This act was an attempt to preserve the imperial status of the Carolingians for the future. Louis' early reign, at which chapter one ends, also saw attempts by the emperor to further consolidate the realm. For Louis' reign, the documentary evidence will show a new emphasis on the imperial authority of the Carolingians.

While this thesis is concerned with the emergence of a Carolingian empire, it ultimately seeks to understand the reasons that empire failed. Timothy Reuter has argued that the halt of military expansion in the 810s caused the internal problems of the 820s and 830s that led to the disintegration of the empire in 843.[18] While this argument provides a tidy picture of the general decline of the Carolingian realm, it does not take into account the individual contingencies of the decline. The only way to examine these contingencies and provide a closer look at the events leading up to 843, one must examine the reign of Lothar I. That is the topic of chapters two and three of this thesis.

Lothar has received little historiographical attention outside of the general focus on the Carolingian civil war. Some recent scholarship, such as Elina Screen's work on Lothar's charters, has attempted to correct this lacuna. However, judging from the fact that her work is still unpublished, except for an article from her dissertation, Carolingian scholarship is still quite averse to studying the eldest son of Louis the Pious. Simon Coupland has made headway in examining the numismatic evidence of Lothar's reign. However, these scholars remain the only two to look at evidence with a firm focus on Lothar. Chapters two and three are

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[18] Timothy Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 35, 1985.

continuations of these scholars attempts to bring the reign of Lothar into a clearer view, while examining the influence and ultimate decline of the imperial nature of the Carolingian realm.

Chapter two focuses on the early reign of Lothar from his coronation in 817 to the failure of his second rebellion in 834. This chapter seeks to understand the reasons that Lothar rebelled. Rather than simply see him as a rebellious son, a natural outcome of Carolingian scholarship's reliance on the biased narratives of the *Annals of St. Bertin* and Nithard, I outline the events that led to the rebellions of 828 and 833. I also examine the effects of Lothar's status as co-emperor in pushing him to revolt. Chapter three picks up after the defeat of Lothar in 834 and examines his reign until his death in 855, including his reign in Italy from 834 to 840. During this time that Lothar takes a more reserved approach, waiting to return to his father's good graces. By the time of his father's death in 840, Lothar had once again received the imperial crown, but had direct control over less than half of the empire. Lothar immediately set out to establish himself as ruler over the whole empire in 840, leading to problems with his brothers and ultimately sparking civil war. Chapter three looks at the context of the Frankish civil war, including Lothar's actions and decision-making process, in order to reveal the various extenuating circumstances of the event that sounded the death knell of the Carolingian empire. Finally, chapter three examines the years between 843 and 855, revealing a persistent and resilient Lothar who was unable to bring the empire back under his control.

<u>Sources</u>

I have a variety of Carolingian sources, including narrative, capitulary, numismatic, and charter evidence. The narrative evidence is most abundant, but is also the most problematic. Previous historical reliance on the biased accounts of Nithard and the *Annals of St. Bertin* has

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allowed for either the vilification or the lack of concern for Lothar I.[19] These sources offer the most polemical perspectives of Lothar's reign, especially before and during the Frankish Civil War (840-843). Both of these sources were written for Charles the Bald and present a distinct pro-Charles and Louis the Pious view. However, the details of these accounts, along with those of the *Royal Frankish Annals*, the *Annals of Fulda*, works by Einhard, and others, provide lucrative detail. I also examine the charter and capitulary evidence found in the collection of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. These documents provide a clear look at how the Carolingians sought to represent themselves as well as their attempts to create networks and establish more centralized control of the Carolingian realm. The problem with using these documents is twofold. Charters reflect circumstances and alliances that are at times fleeting. Capitularies are problematic in that they were ad hoc measures intended to deal with problems across the realm, but were not guaranteed to be implemented on the localized level. In most of the narrative and the documentary evidence, I have provided my own translations. In cases, where I used another's translation, I listed their work first in the citation. Otherwise, the entry includes the *MGH* citation first. Finally, I have also used the numismatic evidence presented by Simon Coupland and have incorporated his findings in my work.[20]

Finally, I have not included as many non-English sources as I would have wanted because of my inexperience and time constraints. These sources are valuable and deserve more extensive consideration than I have thus far been able to give them. I have, however, included those giants of Carolingian and early Medieval studies, such as Ganshof, Fichtenau, Halphen,

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[19] I will be using the version of the *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* and the *Annales Bertiniani*. Some of the translations, where indicated, come from Bernard Scholz, trans., *Royal Frankish Annals* in *Carolingian Chronicles* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970) and Nelson, Janet, trans. *Annals of St. Bertin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), respectively.

[20] Simon Coupland, "The Coinage of Lothar I (840-855)" in *The Numismatic Chronicle* vol. 161 (2001), 157-198 and Coupland "Carolingian Single Finds and the Economy of the Early Ninth-Century" in *The Numismatic Chronicle* v. 170, 2010, 287-320.

and Duby. I have of course covered many of the English-speaking historians at the forefront of these studies today. I have though spent much time in the primary literature, examining the capitulary and diplomatic evidence as well as the narrative sources, both in translation and original language.

CHAPTER II:

FROM *REX FRANCORUM* TO *IMPERATOR AUGUSTUS*: THE CAROLINGIAN

SEARCH FOR UNITY AND STABILITY, 751-817

Shortly before the coup d'état of 751, the Carolingian propagandists, Fuldrad of St.

Denis and Burchard of Würzburg, questioned Pope Zacharias II concerning the nature of royal

authority. They questioned whether a king could rule without holding the power of royal

authority himself. By the time of their inquiry, the Carolingian mayors of the palace had

conquered the regions of Neustria and Austrasia, the two most important wells of Frankish

political power. The growing powers of the Carolingian mayors had reduced the Merovingian

kings to mere puppet kings[21] So when Burchard and Fulrad put the question concerning the

right to rule to Pope Zacharias, everyone concerned knew that behind the "theoretical"

discussion, they were testing whether the Pope would support a Carolingian overthrow of the

Merovingian king.   According to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, he did. Zacharias replied to

Burchard and Fuldrad, saying, "it was better to call him [Pepin] king who had royal power than

the one who did not."[22]

When Pope Zacharias signaled his agreement with Fulrad and Burchard, the Carolingian

coup d'état commenced. Pepin II, the mayor of the palace, set out in November of 751 to

Soissons, where Zacharias crowned him king of the Franks. Pope Stephen II succeeded

Zacharias in 752 and tonsured Childeric III, who was later sent to the monastery of St. Bertin.

Thus, the Carolingians seized the Frankish kingdom for themselves. However, not all were

happy with the Carolingian seizure of power. Rosamond McKitterick has discussed at the length

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[21] *MGH SSRG*, 25:3. *Quae licet in illo finite possit videri, tamen iam dudum nullius vigoris erat, nec quicquam in se clarum praeter inane regis vocabulum praeferebat.*
[22] *MGH SSRG*, 6:9-10. Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 39.

the persistence of Merovingian sympathies among the Frankish magnates.[23] In order to legitimize their reign and create lasting unity under a new dynasty, the Carolingians sought to emphasize their position as *rex Francorum* in their administrative documents, allied themselves with the Church, and attempted to consolidate royal power through increased capitulary production and the use of royal agents. It is this emphasis on unity that propelled the Carolingians forward, transitioning them from simply *rex Francorum* to *imperator augustus* after the coronation of Charlemagne in 800. By the time of the *Ordinatio Imperii* (817), the Carolingians saw themselves as rulers of a Christian empire and, as a result, began to make administrative and inheritance changes. The imperial crown did influence Carolingian political strategies, and it was during the first two decades of the ninth century that the imperial ideal received its fullest expression.

Carolingian rulers as *Rex Francorum*

Between the coup of 751 and Charlemagne's coronation in 800, the Carolingians sought to expel any doubts that they were the rightful rulers of the Franks. However, instead of further denouncing their predecessors, highlighting their inadequacies and shortcomings, they sought to emphasize the continuity of royal power. The Carolingians represented themselves as the true kings of the Franks, divinely appointed. The Carolingians constantly invoked their title of *rex Francorum* and emphasized their royal authority through charters, capitularies, and coinage. This emphasis began under Pepin III and increased greatly during his son's reign.

The documentary evidence for the reign of Pepin III is sparse at best. In the vast collection of the *Monumenta Germainiae Historica*, only seven capitularies and forty-two charters exist. Nevertheless, these documents show an immediate emphasis on the kingly title.

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[23] Rosamond McKitterick *Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians: 751-987* (Brunt Mill, UK: Longman Group, 1983), 50.

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In March of 752, four months after the November coup, Pepin issued his first extant charter to

Fulrad of St. Denis. In this charter, Pepin asserts his position as king. The opening sentence says

directly, "Pepin, king of the Franks, illustrious man."[24] Use of *vir illuster* dates to Roman times

and was used by the Merovingians in the sixth through eighth centuries. The Frankish kings,

Childebert and Clothar both occasionally used the title at the beginning of their charters and

capitularies.[25] Pepin's use of the royal verbiage of previous Merovingian kings is an attempt

legitimizes his own reign. The brevity of the statement makes the title and assertion of royal

authority appear as a matter of fact. There is no need to explicate or waste one's time with

providing justification for Pepin as king. He simply is.

The court of Pepin also spent much effort expressing the continuation of power from the

Merovingian through the Carolingian dynasty. The Carolingians of course continued to use the

title *rex Francorum,* but also included honorific epithets used by the Merovingians, such as

excellentissimus, gloriossimus, and *praecellentissimus.*[26] The continued use of Roman and

Merovingian titles expressed the continuation of Frankish power under a new family and would

also be useful in establishing their imperial power in the ninth-century. Of the forty-two

charters, thirty-three use the above phrase and invocation at the beginning. The other nine

charters also use the kingly title, but include phrases like "by the grace of God" or "divinely

ordained."[27] These additions show the Carolingians presenting themselves as God's appointed

rulers. Pepin's capitularies also include *rex Francorum*, but less consistently. Only three of the

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[24] *MGH DD Kar.1*, 3. *Pippinus rex Francorum vir illuster.*
[25] For examples see, *MGH Cap. I*, 15 and *MGH DD Merov.*, 9, 30, 34, 45, 105, 191, 195. The epithet appears mostly in charter evidence, and various Merovingian kings, including Clovis I, Childebert I, Childebert II, and Dagobert I, used it during their reigns, making the title one with a long-established past and useful for the court of Pepin I.
[26] *MGH Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini Aevi*, 124, 147, and 394.
[27] Ibid., 1-60.

seven capitularies use the royal title.[28] However, even the capitularies of the more prolific reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious do not always include their titles.

Under Charlemagne, the Carolingians only increased their efforts to assert themselves as divinely-sanctioned rulers. The earliest of Charlemagne's charters reveal him using the same title of his father, "king of the Franks, illustrious man."[29] After the conquest of the Lombards in 774, however, the Carolingian scribes added the title, *rex Langobardorum*.[30] Charlemagne sought to draw on the legitimacy of this *gens* much the same way his father had drawn on the authority of his Merovingian predecessors. Shortly thereafter, the charters begin to include a rather peculiar designation, *patricius Romanorum*. This epithet was intended to indicate that Charlemagne was the patron of the papacy and the Roman *gentes*. He had earned the right to this title by conquering Italy and shielding the papacy from the Lombards. Idlar Garipzanov shows that the title had been introduced by Constantine the Great and was intended for "displaying outstanding merits before the empire and gave authority and prestige to its owners."[31] Charlemagne, like his father, emphasized his piety and by extension his divine right to rule. In his capitularies, we see the inclusion of phrases, such as *rex et rector*, *Karolus gloriosissimus,* and *devotus sanctae aeclessiae defensor*.[32] These phrases not only highlighted the Carolingians as *rex Francorum*, but futher highlighted Carolingian patronage and protection of the church.

What we see in the charter, capitulary, and numismatic evidence of the Carolingians before 800 is the emphasis on their kingly authority. Pepin III immediately began to invoke the

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[28] *MGH Cap. 1*, 33, 40, and 42.
[29] These charters also include the *dei gratia* of Pepin's final charters.
[30] *MGH DD Kar. 1*, 118.
[31] See Idlar Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 124. Garipzanov also points out that the epithet was used in papal letters to Charlemagne's court.
[32] *MGH Cap. I*, 47 and 53.

title, *rex Francorum*, in his charters and capitularies. Under Charlemagne, this invocation became more elaborate and saw the addition of not only lengthier epithets, but also the inclusion of titles other than king of the Franks. The Carolingians drew on the legitimacy of the peoples they conquered, especially those with long established histories, such as the Lombards. The Carolingians also relied on the authority of the papacy and the church, calling themselves defenders of the church and fathers of the church. The use of these titles and epithets was intended to create unity and stability throughout the Frankish realm. However, nowhere more do we see an attempt to create lasting unity than through the Carolingians alliance with the papacy.

Carolingian Alliance with the Papacy

The Carolingian alliance with the papacy began shortly before the coup of 751. Following the successful coup, we again see the involvement of the papacy. Pope Zacharias anointed Pepin king of the Franks in the same fashion as the ancient prophets had anointed the kings of Israel, emphasizing Pepin's God-given right to rule. In 754, Pope Stephen II reanointed Pepin alongside his two sons, Charles and Carloman. Here the Carolingians established a bond with the papacy that proved important in continuing and expanding their royal authority. Although the papacy had initiated the alliance to deal with the encroaching Lombards and the inability of the Byzantine Empire to protect it, the Carolingians were more than willing to step in and aid the Roman see.

The Carolingian kings began to assert themselves as defender of the church and father of the Romans during the reign of Charlemagne. These titles do not appear in any of the charter or capitulary evidence for Pepin, but the Carolingians were staunch patrons of the church both in a military and economic sense. During the reign of Pepin III, the Lombards of Italy further restricted the Byzantine presence on the Italian peninsula with Aistulf's seizure of Ravenna.

Until that point, the Byzantines, as continuers of the eastern Roman Empire, were the patrons of the papacy. However, as the ability of the Byzantines to protect the papacy from the encroaching Lombards waned, the papacy began to turn more towards the Franks. The shift towards the Franks began when Pepin I initiated contact with the papacy to settle the issue of the ineptness of Merovingian royal authority. It is this shift in papal relations that opened the door for Pepin's seizure of power.

Under Charlemagne, efforts to further align with the papacy were realized with his capture of the Lombard king, Desiderius. After 774, the kingdom of the Lombards was incorporated into the Carolingian realm, and Charlemagne's court began to incorporate the Lombard title in its charters. The Carolingians had proven better able to protect and patronize the church than their eastern contemporaries. During Charlemagne's reign we also see an economic patronage of the papacy. Neil Christie asserts that the Carolingian patronage of Rome under Charlemagne served in later decades to free it from its dependency on external entities for help and support, including the Carolingians themselves.[33] Nevertheless, through his patronage, Charlemagne sought to solidify Franco-papal relations, and under him the papacy was freed from looking to the Byzantines or worrying about the Lombards.

The Carolingians also asserted themselves over doctrinal issues within the Church. In 787, the Second Council of Nicaea reestablished the veneration of images under the dowager empress, Irene. In order to refute the conclusions of the council, Charlemagne commissioned either Alcuin or Theodulf of Orleans to write the *Libri Carolini* in response.[34] Charlemagne's

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[33] Neil Christie, "Charlemagne and the Renewal of Rome" in Joana Story ed., *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* (Manchester, 2005): 167-184, 179.

[34] The issue over the authorship of the *Libri Carolini* has not fully been settled. While some scholars have uncritically accepted Theodulf of Orleans as the author based on the flawed arguments of A. Freeman and P. Meyvaert, Theodulf's authorship has long been challenged by Luitpold Wallach. Wallach conversely credits Alcuin with the document's authorship. For more on Wallach's argument, see L. Wallach, "Charlemagne's *Libri Carolini* and Alcuin: A Diplomatic-Historical Study," *Traditio* 9 (1953), 143-149 and L. Wallach, *Diplomatic Studies in*

attempt to refute the council must be viewed in the context of the Carolingian-Byzantine struggle over religious authority, which was intricately tied to political authority. The *Libri Carolini* often invoked the names of Constantine and David. By doing so, Charlemagne was asserting the Carolingians as the true rulers of Christendom and the rightful patrons of the papacy. Charlemagne was a new Constantine or David, and the Carolingians would lead the Christian world in the correct doctrine. The language of the *Libri* is also quite pointed, calling the synod foolish and arrogant.[35] The *Libri* then proceeds to lay out a theological rebuttal of the synod's decisions, showing that the Carolingians are the true diviners of doctrine. Charlemagne's attempt to refute the Second Council of Nicaea was part of a larger attempt to exert greater influence over the church, which grew out of the growing need to maintain order and unity in an expanding realm.

Centralizing the Realm

Since 751, the territory under Carolingian control had been expanding rather quickly (See Map 2a). In 768, Charlemagne subdued the Aquitainians, and by the 780s had added the Lombard kingdom to his realm. The introduction of new peoples into the Carolingian realm

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Latin and Greek Documents from the Carolingian Age (Ithaca: Cornell Universtiy Press, 1977). Dr. Wallach's critical edition and commentary of the first two books of the *Libri Carolini*, where he further addresses Freeman and Meyvaert's arguments, is also being posthumously published. See L. Wallach, *Libri Carolini Sive Opus Caroli Magni Contra Synodum: Acutore Alcuino Recensuit et Notis Instruxit* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, forthcoming).

[35] *Opus Caroli regis contra synodum*, ed. A. Freeman with P. Meyvaert, *MGH Conc.* II.i (Hanover, 1998). The introduciton of the *Praefatio* reads *In Nomine Domini Et Salvatoris Nostri Iesu Christi. Incipit Opus Inlustrissimi Et Excellentissimi Seu Spectabilis Viri Caroli, Nutu Dei Regis Francorum, Gallias, Germanian Italiamque Sive Harum Finitimas Provintias Domino Opitulante Regentis, Contra Synodum, Que In Partibus Graetiae Pro Adorandis Imaginibus Stolide Sive Arrongenter Gesta Est.*
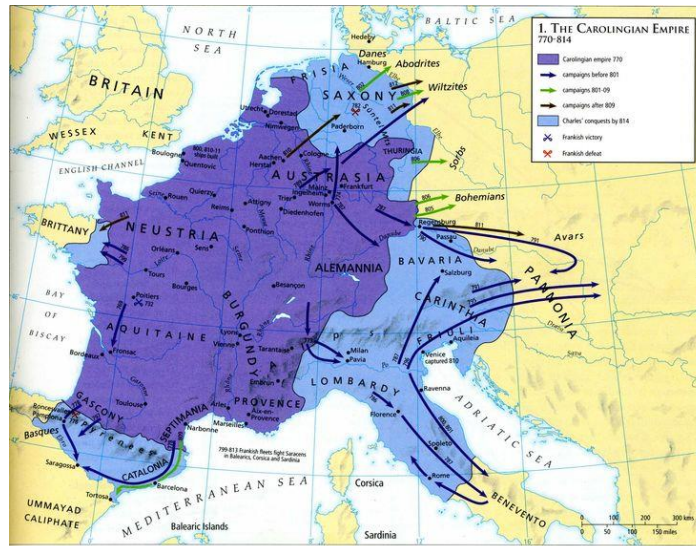
Map 2a shows the rapid expansion of the Carolingian Empire under Charlemagne (768-814).

presented a problem in that maintaining unity and stability in a kingdom of diverse peoples

(with different languages, legal traditions, and monetary systems) could not be solely achieved

through maintaining kinship alliances. Thus, the Carolingians increasingly attempted to

concentrate political authority into royal hands. During the 780s and 790s an explosion of

capitulary output occurred. These capitularies concerned a wide range of topics. Some, such as

the *Admonitio Generalis* (789), concerned the commissioning of parochial schools, issues of

clerical behavior, and issues of doctrine.[36] Others, such as the *Breviarum Missorum*

Aquitanicum (789), directly charged Charlemagne's royal agents, *missi dominici*, with enforcing

edicts.[37] The *missi* were royal agents responsible for ensuring that these capitularies were

followed. They were sent from the court into the various areas of the kingdom to report any

counts or other local authorities who were not in compliance with capitularies. Capitularies

were not laws, though some of them did amend laws. Instead these capitularies served as *ad hoc*

measures against persistent and immediate problems. For instance, the *Synodus*

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[36] *Admonitio Generalis* (789), *MGH*, *Cap. I*, p 54-58.

[37] *MGH Cap. I* 24.1, 65. *De illo edicto quod domus et genitor noster Pipinus instituit et nos in postmodum pro nostros missos conservare et implere iussimus vel de nostros edictos, quomodo fuerunt custoditi*. See Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

Franconofurtensis (794) officially dealt with the issues of the Second Council of Nicaea (787)

and the rebellious count Tassilo of Bavaria, who had been deposed in 788.[38] Determining the

effectiveness of these edicts on a local level is difficult because of the sparsity of evidence.

Nevertheless, what the capitulary evidence reveals is that increasingly the Carolingians were

trying to extend royal influence outside of the Carolingian demesne. These attempts were not

only occurring in and around the royal court with capitularies, such as the *Capitulare de Villis*

(c.799), but also on a more localized level through the ministering of royal agents.[39]

    Other attempts at consolidating control into royal hands took place through the

standardization of coinage and expansion of the economy. At the Synod of Frankfurt in 794,

Charlemagne issued an edict that standardized the minting and use of coinage throughout the

realm.[40] Hoard finds studied by Simon Coupland have also shown an increase in weight and

value with the post-reform coinage.[41] Through this reform, Charlemagne intended to further

unite the realm, which was increasingly home to various peoples as the Carolingians continued

to conquer. Furthermore, the standardization of the images and text on these coins represent the

attempt to further associate power, in this case economic, with the king. Text on the pre-800

coinage included the title, CAR[O]LVS REX FR[ANCORUM], and made a great ideological

impact.[42] It is during this time that we also see an increase in the number of mints as well as the

opening of Mediterranean trade lanes through Italy.

    Finally, one of the most crucial ways in which the Carolingians attempted to consolidate

power and thus create lasting unity and stability was through their attempts to regulate marriage

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[38] *MGH Cap. I:*28.1-2, 73-74.
[39] For the *Capitulare de Villis*, see *MGH Cap. I*: 32.1-9, 82-91.
[40] *MGH Cap. I*: 28, 74. *De denariis autem certissime sciatis nostrum edictum, quod in omni loci, in omni civitate et in omni empturio similiter vadant isti novi denarii et accipiantur ab omnibus.*
[41] Coupland, Simon, "Charlemagne's Coinage: Ideology and Economy" in *Charlemagne: Empire and Society* ed. by Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 218-223.
[42] Ibid.

and thus limit the pool of heirs to the kingdom. The church advocated lifelong monogamy among its believers. Though the Merovingians had been lax in regulating marriage, allowing the persistence of multiple heirs and claimants, the Carolingians made strides in legislating marriage according to Christian teachings. These strides were largely the result of Pippin and Charlemagne's commitment to passing laws against adultery and divorce. The Carolingians also sought to expand the definition of incest beyond traditional norms that prohibited marriage among siblings, first cousins, step-parents and step-children, and aunts and uncles to their nephews and nieces.[43] Under the Merovingians, anyone outside of immediate family was a potential marriage partner. The Carolingians, however, upheld a broad definition of incest, "extending prohibitions to the seventh degree of consanguinity."[44] However, the Carolingians were not necessarily motivated by religious conviction in their support of monogamy. Wemple argues that the Carolingians were "prompted not by personal convictions, but by political considerations."[45] Carolingian monarchs presided over many councils that dealt with issues of male adultery, yet continued to have several concubines. Nevertheless, the Carolingians needed not only to ensure their legitimacy, but also to make sure that the problems of succession and other internal conflict that had plagued their predecessors did not affect them as well. Thus the Carolingian kings enacted severe penalties for adulterers and ensured a much more restricted concept of marriage.[46]

The turmoil that had wracked the Merovingian kingdoms showed the need to limit heirs. With a newfound relationship with the church and an intimate knowledge of the tumultuous reign of the Merovingians, Pepin presided over marital legislation. At the Frankish synod of

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[43] Wemple, 75-76.
[44] Wemple, 76.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Wemple, 77.

Verneuil in 755, Pepin outlawed clandestine marriages among the nobility.[47] Controlling who married whom meant knowing who was married to whom and which offspring were legitimate heirs. Pepin also presided over councils restricting divorce. The Council of Compiegne in 757 made women and men subject to the same laws of divorce,[48] such as the one passed under the direction of Saint Boniface at the Council of Soissons in 742. This council deemed that divorce was only acceptable if the wife was guilty of infidelity.[49] New laws extended the same regulations on male fidelity that had previously only applied to women. The attempt to limit marriage partners and divorce was not only an attempt to strengthen the relationship between the church and the Carolingians, but was also a pragmatic solution to the chaos and disunity caused by having multiple heirs, a result of clandestine marriages and divorce.

The marriage of Pepin and Betrada was the ideal marriage in the eyes of the church. It was lifelong and produced legitimate heirs. There was no question over who would receive the lands of Francia and no inter-household conflicts like that among Pepin the Younger, his brother, Carloman, and their half-brother, Grifo. Although Pepin had tried to repudiate his wife early on,[50] he went on to have a successful marriage. Pepin had no known concubines, nor did he have multiple wives. Thus, when the Church advocated marriage, it advocated that type of marriage that Pepin and Betrada had.

Under Charlemagne, the attempt to restrict marriage and heirs continued. Charlemagne went much farther than his father had concerning adultery. In 796 at Friuli, Charlemagne declared that adultery did not absolve a husband and wife of their marital vows.[51] In 779,

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[47] *MGH Cap. I*: 14.15, 36. *Ut omnes homines laici publicas nuptias faciant, tam nobiles quam innobiles.*
[48] Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1983), 80.
[49] Wemple, 77.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Wemple, 76.

Charlemagne also made harsher laws concerning consanguinity by adding confiscation of lands to its punishment.[52] Although Charlemagne did not live up to the apparent sexual restraint of his father, he did maintain his legitimate marriages until the death of his spouses. He had concubines, but children by them were now no longer automatically considered legitimate heirs. For example, Charlemagne' first son, Pepin the Hunchback, despite being the eldest and being given a royal name, was never given any land. Charlemagne also kept his daughters under close watch. He refused to let them out of his control, keeping them at his palace with their various lovers and refusing to permit them to marry, presumably to prevent any legitimate children from becoming rivals to his sons.[53]

The policies passed by Pepin and Charlemagne had great political ramifications. They paved the way for better relations with the papacy, but more importantly they were largely successful in limiting the pool of heirs. At the time of his death, Pepin had only two legitimate sons, and Charlemagne had just one.[54] These policies allowed for more oversight over who married and made lifelong monogamy the standard. However, these new strategies for limiting heirs were not foolproof. During the Carolingian Age, forty-eight percent of women died between the ages of 15 and 39 compared to only thirty-one percent of men.[55] With a disproportionate number of women dying younger, the likelihood of a king outliving his queen was good. Charlemagne outlived all four of his wives, and was extremely lucky, although he may not have seen it this way, not to produce any more legitimate heirs. Therefore, this is where the limiting of heirs falters, namely in serial monogamy. While adultery could not dissolve the bonds of marriage, death could. Furthermore, with the death of a few sons likely (all but one of

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Einhard, *Vita Karoli* in *The Two Lives of Charlemagne* ed. A.J. Grant (Digireads Publishing, 2010), p 27.
[54] Although Charles Martel worked with Boniface on marriage restrictions, he was not particularly avid in following them. He kept concubines, but, nevertheless, had only three sons.
[55] Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 102.

Charlemagne's sons died before him), the need to remarry and produce a healthy number of

heirs was important. So, on the one hand was the problem of producing too many heirs, and on

the other was the fear of not producing enough.

Another way to limit heirs was to intentionally leave some sons out of the inheritance.

Although primogeniture would not mature until the eleventh century (if then), eldest sons were

special enough to be designated as such by Carolingian annalists. For example, in the *Royal*

Frankish Annals note that all the sons of Liub, king of the Wilzi, shared the kingdom, but

Milegast and Cealadrag, as the elder sons, held "supremacy over the whole kingdom."[56]

Sometimes the eldest of all sons was noted in the annals, such as Lothar in the *Annals of*

Fulda[57] or Pepin, the bastard son of Charlemagne, in the *Revised Royal Frankish Annals*.[58] This

notice shows at least a belief that the eldest son held a higher power or significance. Also, the

eldest son came of age sooner than his siblings and had a head start on laying claim to the

power, resources, and lands of the family. However, the eldest son generally only maintained

nominal supremacy over his brothers.

When Charles Martel divided his lands among his sons, he intentionally left his son,

Grifo, by his second wife, Swanahilde, out of the inheritance.[59] Since the annals are not clear,

there is no way to know why Charles left Grifo out of the inheritance. It may have been an

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[56] Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 112; *In quo inter caeteras barbarorum legationes, quae veliussae vel sua sponte venerunt, duo fratres, reges videlicet Wilzorum, controversiam inter se de regno habentes ad praesentiam imperatoris venerunt, quorum nomina sunt Milegastus et Cealadragus. Erant idem filii Liubi regis Wilzorum; qui licet cum fratribus suis regnum divisum teneret, tamen, propter quod [maior natu erat], ad eum totius regni summa pertinebat. Qui cum commisso cum orientabilis Abodritis proelio interisset, populus Wilzorum filium eius Milegastum, quia [maior natu erat], regem sibi constituit.*
[57] Timothy Reuter, trans., *The Annals of Fulda* in *Manchester Medieval Sources series: Ninth-Century Histories, Volume II* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 16.
[58] King, *Revised RFA* in *Charlemagne*, 124.
[59] Fredegar, *The Fourth Book of the Chronicle of Fredegar and Continuations*, ed. and trans. by J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (New York: Nelson, 1960), p 97. Fredegar does not list Grifo as an heir of Charles the Bald. The Royal Frankish Annals list Grifo as an heir, but justify his disinheritance because of his "wicked" mother. It appears that Charles disinherited his son out of pressure from his other sons, resulting in Grifo's rebellion after Charles' death in 741.

intentional act because Grifo was possibly illegitimate or Grifo's older brothers may have promted the decision.[60] Whether intentionally or by accident, between the disinheritance of Grifo in 741 and the division providing for Charles the Bald in 828, a long precedent of a limited heirs had been set. This precedent was set not only indirectly by restricting and controlling marriage through stricter marital laws, but also directly, at least in Charles Martel's case, through the limiting of partible inheritance.

The Coronation of Charlemagne and the Emerging Imperial Status

Between 751 and 800, the Carolingians faced the problems of an expanding kingdom. As new peoples were introduced in the Carolingian political system, they brought with them their own languages, customs, laws, and culture. The problem for the Carolingians was how to incorporate these new peoples and their territories into the Frankish realm with as little trouble as possible. To accomplish this task, the Carolingians issued various capitularies that created royal agents to act as "guardians of the law" on a localized level, standardized coinage, expanded trade, and better restricted marriage. They also allied with the church and represented themselves as the true rulers over a multi-*gentes*, Christian realm. These attempts at unity, however, led to a new realization for the Carolingian kings. They did not simply rule over a single people. The documentary evidence alone shows the increasingly convoluted titles of the Carolingian king. He was not only *rex Francorum*, but also *rex Langobardorum* and *patricius Romanorum*.[61] There were also the various other conquered peoples who did not have well-established leadership titles associated with their territories. Therefore, the period between 751 and 800 saw a slow transition in the political ideology of the Carolingian king. By the end of the eighth century, their realm sprawled across the majority of Western Europe and an increasing

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[60] Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 37.
[61] For example, *MGH DD Kar. 1*, 118. Heinrich Fichtenau has shown that the use of these titles were regional with titles like *rex Langobardorum* and *particius Romanorum* used in Italy and *rex Francorum* used in Francia.

number of *gens*. It was in December of 800 that this realm would finally be called what it was, an empire.

The coronation of Charlemagne at Rome on 25 December 800 was the culmination of Franco-papal relations under the Carolingians and had a profound effect on the idea that the Carolingian kings ruled over a Christian empire.[62] The fact that something of significance was going to happen at Christmas Day mass in Rome did not go unnoticed by Charlemagne and his court. Despite Einhard's assertion that had Charlemagne known what the pope was going to do he would not have entered the basilica at all, it is likely that he did know. During the preceding year, Alcuin had praised Charlemagne as a Constantine-esque ruler and Charlemagne and his court had to expect something going into such a significant place on such a significant day. This new imperial status was the recognition that the Carolingians were the protectors and rulers of not one *gens* but several. Thus, attempts to create lasting unity only deepened. Under Charlemagne, we see new attempts at effectively administering the empire by using the new imperial status as well as an emphasis on confraternal rulership with the issuing of *Divisio Regnorum* (806). However, with Louis the Pious, attempts to create lasting unity led to the crowning of Lothar as sole heir to the empire. It is clear that the new imperial status provided the theoretical framework to create such a drastic change in political policy.

Despite the new imperial status during the reigns of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, some scholars argue that the imperial crown had no real effect. Frankish politics continued to operate on the political foundation that always had – charismatic kingship and political networking. Mayke de Jong has argued that there was no real emphasis on unity under the

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[62] See Louis Haphen, *Charlemagne et l'empire carolingien* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1947), 181-194; Robert Folz, *Le Couronnement imperial de Charlemagne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 157-177; Jeffrey Russell, *A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1968), 77-81; Alessandro Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 89-92.

Carolingians and that documents, such as the *Ordinatio Imperii*, which she emphasizes was actually called the *Divsio Imperii*, merely continued past policies of dividing the realm among all Frankish sons.[63] However, the *Ordinatio* broke with the Carolingian past in many ways, foremost among these was the giving of a higher title and most of the Frankish lands to one son.

It may be possible to see the effects of the imperial crown through an examination of post-800 capitularies, the content of which was aimed at administrative functioning. After all, capitulary output after 800 was much more prolific than it had been in the previous fifty years. These post-800 capitularies seem to be a part of an increased effort at programmatic administrative reform. Despite the proliferation, Rosamond McKitterick has argued that because of their length and original content compared to that of post-800 capitularies the pre-800 ones are more deserving of the "programmatic" label.[64] Between 768 and 800, Charlemagne engaged in administrative reform by issuing capitularies such as the *Admonitis Generalis* (789) and the *Capitulare de villis* (800). These capitularies concern ecclesiastical and royal administration. For instance, the *Admonitio* pertains to issues of the Frankish church, including the clergy's behavior, the clergy's ability to have wives *in domo*, the establishment of parochial schools, and issues of simony. The *de villis* discusses the function of the royal household, including gathering and maintaining supplies and equipment for hosting the king and his peripatetic court. An extensive analysis of these pre-800 capitualries' content has led McKitterick to confirm that they are much more programmatic than the post-800. The fact that the pre-800 capitularies are a part of Charlemagne's attempt to institute programmatic reform is indisputable. However, the post-800 capitularies deserve further examination.

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[63] Mayke DeJong, *Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 26.
[64] Rosamond McKitterick *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 236-237.

The fact that Charlemagne increasingly used the church to institute programmatic reform is evidenced by the reissue of capitula from pre-800 documents, such as the *Admonitio*, which almost entirely concern issues of the clergy. However, the question of why the Carolingians were now concerned with programmatic reform and why they instituted it largely through the church requires examination. The main goal of programmatic reform was effective rule to ensure peace and extend royal control. In the *Admonitio*, we get a clear expression of this sentiment. The sixty-second capitula addressed to all the Frankish people proclaims, "So that there is peace, concord, and unanimity with all Christian people among the bishops, abbots, counts, judges, and everywhere either major or minor persons, because nothing is pleasing to God without peace, not even the service of holy offering to God, likewise we read the Lord ordering in the Gospel."[65] This excerpt shows that Charlemagne saw himself as ruling over a Christian kingdom, and thus it was his obligation to ensure peace and stability through effective administration. The church provided an ideological framework for emphasizing unity as a Christian Empire.

Rule over a Christian empire was furthered by successful warfare. Since the coup of 751, Carolingian borders had been expanding at a rapid pace. In his first year as king, Charlemagne subdued Aquitania. He expanded into the Pyrenees, Italy, and east into Pannonia between the 770s and 800. Consequently, the Carolingians found themselves as rulers over not only Franks, but also over Burgundians, Italians, Saxons, Thuringians, Slavs, and various Spanish peoples. The introduction of these peoples into Carolingian society provided a problem for centralized rulership in that they also brought with them their own languages, customs,

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[65] *MGH Cap. I*, No. 22, 58. *Omnibus. Ut pax sit et concordia et unianimitas cum omni populo christiano inter episcopos, abbates, comites, iudices et omnes ubique seu maiores seu minores personas, quia nihil Deo sine pace placet nec munus sanctae oblationis ad altare, sicut in euangelio ipso Domino praecipiente legimus…*

cultures, and often legal traditions. As a result, the Carolingians increasingly emphasized unity as a Christian people in order to maintain control over vastly disparate territories.[66]

Additionally, Carolingian use of the church must be seen as a part of the effort to establish and maintain unity. For the Carolingians, the church, as representative of a united Christian people, provided the ideological framework to institute programmatic reform. The Carolingians effectively styled themselves as protectors of the papacy and contributors to theological debate, especially in opposition to the Byzantines. Nowhere did the Carolingians assert themselves more as protectors of Christendom than in their religious contention with the Byzantine Empire. This struggle is best revealed in the fight over the papacy and the iconoclasm debate. As the Lombard threat increased, the papacy began to look more to the Franks for support and protection. Charlemagne's removal of the Lombard king Desiderius endeared him to the papacy and only deepened the alliance that had begun in the early 750s. The Carolingians also directly opposed the Byzantines during the iconoclasm debate, when Charlemagne's court put forth the *Libri Carolini* to dispute the Byzantine rulings of the Second Council of Nicaea (787). Both the elimination of the Lombard threat and the creation of the *Libri Carolini* saw the Carolingians assert themselves as protectors of the papacy and intimately involved with church doctrine in the west. Thus, the Carolingians were exerting their influence outside of Francia before the imperial crown was placed on Charlemagne's head. However, their identity as rulers over a Christian people had not yet received its fullest expression and was still in a nebulous state. It would not be until the imperial coronation of Charlemagne that the idea that the Carolingians were the rulers of the west alongside the Byzantines in the east was realized.

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[66] The replacement of previous titles with *imperator augustus* emphasized consolidation of power. Often this title was explicated by associating it with the various regions throughout the Empire. For example, *MGH, Cap. I*, 261.

The prolific output of capitularies following 800 as well as the circumstances between the division of the empire (806) and Charlemagne's death (814) indicate that the imperial status had an effect on the Carolingians. There are 18 capitularies dated to before 800,[67] while 53 date to post-800. Although McKitterick maintains that the post-800 capitularies lack the content to be considered programmatic and are simple reissues of pre-800 capitularies, the fact that Charlemagne saw the need to reissue these charters indicates that something had changed after 800. In many of the capitularies after 800, we find a direct reference to Charlemagne as *imperator augustus*. For instance, in the 803 capitulary, *Capitulare Legibus Additum*, which made additions to Salic law, the opening line reads, "In the name of Christ, the capitularies of the law of Emperor Charles, newly created in the third year of our most fundamental august Charles, begin."[68] Charlemagne's court immediately included the imperial title in his documents with the first instance occurring in a capitulary from 802.[69] Thus, if we consider that the new imperial status of Charlemagne prompted him to reissue old capitularies under the legitimacy of a new authority, then the evidence falls into place. The post-800 capitularies may not have been the first of the programmatic capitularies, but they were nevertheless a part of them.

Charlemagne's handling of the division of the realm further highlights the increasing focus on unity brought on by the imperial ideal. Charlemagne recognized that he had three sons in line to succeed him and decided to prevent the problems of factionalism that having multiple heirs created. Louis the Pious would attempt to prevent the same problems in 817. However, the two kings' strategies were completely different. Where Charlemagne embraced the regional

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[67] Some of these capitula are dated within a range that includes 800.

[68] *MGH, Cap. I*, 112 *In Christi nomine incipiunt capitula legis imperatoris Karoli nuper inventa anno tertio elemntissimi domni nostrl Karoli augusti.*

[69] *MGH, Cap. I*, 91. *Serenissimus igitur et christianissimus domnus imperator Karolus …*

differences by giving his sons equal shares of the kingdom along the cultural and regional

boundaries, Louis abandoned the age-old traditions of regional autonomy.

Charlemagne had three surviving sons (Louis the Pious, Charles, and Pepin) in 806, all

of whom were from his second wife, Hildegard. In 806, Charlemagne was in his sixties, and

realized that all of his sons might survive him. However, Charlemagne did not leave the fate of

the Carolingian Empire to chance. He commissioned the *Divisio Regnorum* (806) which

meticulously divided the empire equally among his three sons. Charlemagne made arrangement

for every foreseeable problem. The document makes clear the fears of Charlemagne, reading,

"through them [the sons of Charlemagne] has confirmed our own prayers and hopes concerning

the kingdom, and has lightened our fears of being forgotten by a hostile posterity."[70]

Charlemagne's division acknowledged the regional differences so not to lay any groundwork

for further divisions. The intent of Charlemagne was simple. He wished for his sons to rule

jointly, each in his own kingdom aiding the other. The opening of the *Divisio* ends by saying,

"each of them shall be content with his portion as we have assigned it, and shall with God's

help strive to defend the boundaries of his kingdom which border on foreign lands, and to

remain at peace and in charity with his brother."[71] Charlemagne obviously knew that

cooperation among his sons would be tenuous at best, and made the best preparations he could

against future strife. The lands he gave them "border[ed] on foreign lands." If the sons had

external targets, they could focus on them collectively and not on each other.

Despite the *Divisio*'s focus on cofraternal rulership, it nevertheless shows us the

widening political scope of the Carolingian kings. Charlemagne took particular precautions in

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[70] Lyon, 91.

[71] Ibid, 92; *ut sua quisque portione contentus iuxta ordinationem nostrum, et fines regni sui qui ad alienigenas extenduntur cum Dei adiutorio nitatur defendere, et pacem atque caritatem cum fratre custodire.* (*MGH Cap.* I:127).

the *Divisio* to ensure future unity and stability, a result of the fact that the Carolingians increasingly saw themselves as rulers over a Christian empire. Documentary terminology further reveals the widening political scope of the Carolingians. Though the use of such titles as, *rex Langobardorum* and *rex Francorum*, persisted, the documentary evidence also reveals the use of imperial terminology. Therefore, Charlemagne's reign appears to be a transitional period between the old political scope of the Frankish kingdom and the new political scope of the Frankish empire.

Carolingian capitulary evidence under Charlemagne indicates that new political terminology was coming into use. However, since the *Divisio* can reveal much about Charlemagne's political ideology, it is necessary to see what appearance, if any, the new political terminology made in it. Given the fact that old terminology, such as the use of tradition titles and the reference to the Frankish kingdom rather than empire, the *Divisio* would appear to be a representative of traditional views of the Frankish realm. However, in the opening paragraph of the *Divisio*, we see the evocation of the title:

> In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Charles most serene *augustus*, having been crowned great pacific emperor by God, governing the Roman empire, who also through the compassion of God [is] king of the Franks and Lombards, to all the faithful of the holy church of God and of us, namely by those present and those about to exist."[72]

Not only does the document make direct reference to the imperial coronation of Charlemagne and identify him as emperor, but it also makes explicit reference to the "Roman empire." Within the early medieval context, these words refer to the idea of a Christian empire. From the time of

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[72] *MGH, Cap. I*, 126.

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Constantine, the Roman Empire took on a Christian identity, and after the fall of the western half, the idea of a Roman Christian empire was preserved by the church. Thus, in the *Divisio*, Charlemagne is asserting himself as the emperor of a Christian empire, which encompasses many *gens*. He is no longer simply *rex Francorum*, but has assumed a much larger role in the Christian political community.

The Carolingians continued to include older titles, such as *rex Francorum*, in their capitularies. When considering these titles, however, one must keep a few things in mind. First, Charlemagne's reign represents a transitional period, and the continued use of older titles is expected. Second, the use of such titles says more about their own strength than it does about the weakness of the imperial title. The fact that *rex Francorum* and *rex Langobardorum* continued is a result of their having powerful political cachet. Both of these titles represented rulership over established political entities. Thus, for Charlemagne, it was crucial to indicate that he ruled over these historically significant peoples. Finally, these titles are often subordinated to the imperial title in the documents. In the opening paragraph of the *Divisio*, both *rex Francorum* and *rex Langobardorum* are positioned after Charlemagne's imperial status. By listing the kingly titles second, the Carolingian scribes are either subtly indicating that the imperial status is theoretically greater than the other two or they are providing greater cachet to the imperial status by placing these well-established titles in a secondary position.

One may also be skeptical of Charlemagne's emphasis on the imperial status because he did not pass it on to his eldest son, Charles. In the *Divisio*, there is no reference to the imperial title being bestowed on any son. In fact, the *Divisio* continued many of the older Frankish customs. First and foremost was the implementation of partible inheritance. Rather than one of single imperial rulership, the message sent by the *Divisio* was one of equality and cooperation among sons. However, we must not take this message to mean that the new imperial status of

the Frankish realm was void. That Charlemagne embraced the regional differences among the

Franks does not mean that he did not see the Frankish realm as an empire. The Carolingian

focus on unity, the continued use of the imperial title after 800, and the emphasis on the

existence of a Christian people through administrative documents indicates that Charlemagne

saw himself as ruler over a distinctly Christian empire.[73] For Charlemagne though, giving one

son even nominal power over the others could prove disastrous. Nevertheless, the *Divisio*'s

emphasis on the unity and conservation of the empire and the necessity of brotherly cooperation

reveals that Charlemagne saw his sons ruling jointly over a united realm, not individually over

separate kingdoms.[74] And yet older titles and traditions persisted, because Charlemagne's reign

represents a transitional period between the Carolingian king as *rex Francorum* and him as

imperator augustus. Charlemagne could not completely abandon the older traditions of partible

inheritance. Instead he used these traditions and titles to lend support and authority to the new

imperial status of the Carolingians.

As far as not giving the title to Charles in 806 is concerned, Charlemagne doubtless saw

the title as problematic for the brotherly cooperation that he emphasized. Giving the crown to

one son would only exacerbate regional animosities and differences and thus incite internal

conflict. Furthermore, that Charlemagne felt the need to withhold the title indicates its strength

as a political tool.[75] However, by 811, all but one of his sons had died. Louis the Pious survived,

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[73] For the transition from *rex Francorum* to *imperator augustus* in the imagery, see Garipnov, Idlar, *The Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World: 751-877* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2008).

[74] *MGH, Cap. I*, 127. *… ita et hoc vobis notum fieri volumus, quod eosdem per Dei gratiam filios nostros regni a Deo nobis concessi donec in corpore sumus consortes habere, et post nostrum ex hac mortalitate discessum a Deo conservati et servandi imperii vel regni nostril heredes relinquere, si ita divina maiestas adnuerit, optamus.* H.R. Loyn and John Percival, *The Reign of Charlemagne: Documents on Carolingian Government and Administration* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 91.

[75] For more on the imperial title, see See Louis Haphen, *Charlemagne et l'empire carolingien* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1947), 181-194; Robert Folz, *Le Couronnement imperial de Charlemagne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 157-177; Ganshof, F.L., *The Carolingian and Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, trans. by Janet Sondheimer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 41-54; Jeffrey Russell, *A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1968), 77-81; Alessandro

and Charlemagne finally gave the imperial crown to Louis. The crown now presented no problem, and Charlemagne bestowed it upon his son himself at the Aachen assembly in September of 813.[76] The argument could be made that Charlemagne was waiting to give the crown to Charles until his deathbed. However, the commissioning of the *Divisio* in 806 shows that he was already concerned with his demise. It is rather difficult to believe that if Charlemagne had intended to give the crown to Charles, he would not have done it at this time or anytime during the five years between the *Divisio* and Charles' death in 811. Finally, in 814, Louis inherited the entire Empire, and from the beginning of his reign, he attempted to create a true Empire both in name and reality by further centralizing the realm and eliminating the effects of partible inheritance on the unity of the realm.

When Louis the Pious came to power in 814, he had control over all the Frankish lands, which made the enforcement of his position as emperor much easier. He had no remaining brothers with whom to quarrel over political power in the Frankish realm. The Carolingians had been fortunate in this respect. Since 751, the Carolingians had only one surviving heir to the Frankish throne during each succession. Pepin had achieved a successful coup and eliminated potential claimants to the throne in 751. Charlemagne's younger brother, Carloman, died in 771, leaving Charlemagne the only heir. Finally, Louis the Pious outlived all of his brothers and gained the imperial crown by 814. Each time the Carolingians found themselves with one ruler, a circumstance that proved fortuitous for the stability of the realm. This fact did not escape the attention of Louis the Pious in 817. When he commissioned the *Ordinatio Imperii*, he had just recovered from a nearly fatal illness. Dread of leaving the empire without a plan for inheritance

Barbero, *Charlemagne: Father of a Continent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 89-92. I. H. Garipzanov, "Communication of authority in Carolingian titles," *Viator* 36 (2005), 41-82; Idlar Garipzanov, *Symbolic Language of Authority in the Carolingian World* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Marios Costambeys, Matthew Innes, and Simon MacLean, *The Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 160-169.
[76] *Annales Regni Francorum*, MGH, SSRG, 6:138.

pushed Louis to immediately set out the details of his realm. However, rather than continue the tradition of partible inheritance, Louis designated his older son as sole emperor and gave him a majority of the Frankish lands including the Frankish heartlands (See Map 2b). Lothar's brothers, however, were given only the title of king that accompanied seriously reduced lands and were made subject to Lothar when conducting affairs outside of their realms. This act gave the imperial title real effect. Furthermore, it indicates that, whereas Charlemagne's reign was a transition, Louis' reign was a period of realization for the imperial status.
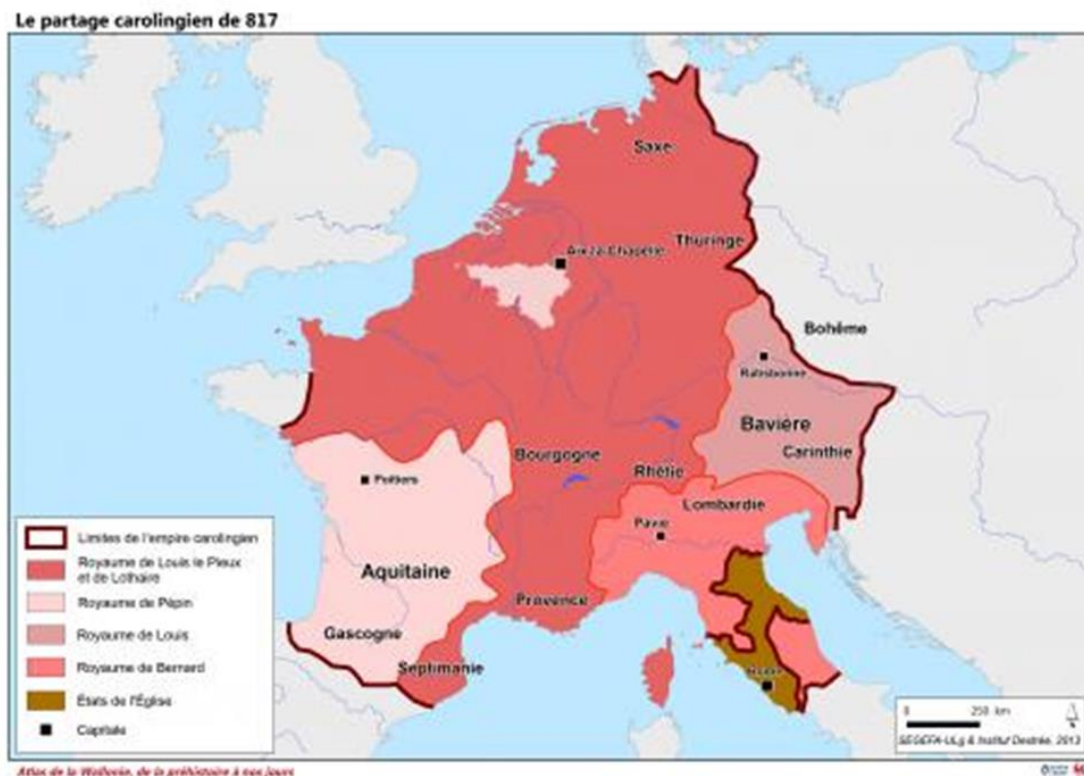
Map 2b – The division of the Empire according to the *Ordinatio* (817).

In 817, Louis the Pious faced a problem similar to the one his father faced in 806. He had three sons who had come of age. After recovering from a deathbed illness, Louis wanted to deal quickly with the problem of inheritance, and so commissioned the *Ordinatio Imperii* (817). The use of *imperium* instead of *regnum* shows the fundamental difference between the intents of Charlemagne and Louis in commissioning these documents. The *Divisio Regnorum* was an

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attempt to divide the "kingdoms" equally, acknowledging the idea of subkingdoms within the Carolingian Empire. However, the *Ordinatio Imperii* was an attempt to provide order and unity to these subkingdoms, and give the imperial status a political reality. Louis perceived the entire idea of subkingdoms as problematic. The *Ordinatio* shows his solution to this problem:

> We believe, at the command of Almighty God, it was accomplished that we and all our people together voted to elect our beloved eldest son Lothar. So, as the divine decree had pointed to him, it pleased us and all our people to crown him solemnly with the imperial diadem, and to appoint him our consort and, God willing, successor to the Empire by common vote.[77]

Louis intended to give Lothar the empire, and his other sons, according to the *Ordinatio*, were given the "title of king."[78] Although the imperial crown held only nominal power, Louis also gave Lothar the majority of the Frankish lands. This act forcefully imposed an imperial identity on the subkingdoms of the Carolingians.

Mayke de Jong has argued that the *Ordinatio* actually had more in common with traditional Carolingian methods of inheritance, such as the implementation of partible inheritance seen in the *Divisio*. De Jong cites the use of more traditional titles, such as king, and the fact that all sons inherited something. She further emphasizes that the title *Ordinatio* was a later addition and the manuscript evidence shows that the document was actually entitled *Divisio Imperii*.[79] However, this argument ignores the actual content of the *Ordinatio*. Unlike

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[77] Pullan, *Sources*, 38; *Quibus rite per triduum celebratis, nutu omnipotentis Dei, ut credimus, actum est, ut et nostra et [totius populi nostri] in dilecti [primogeniti nostri Hlutharii] electione vota concurrerent. Itaque taliter divina dispensatione manifestatum placuit et nobis et [omni populo nostro], more solemni [imperiali diademate coronatum] nobis et consortem et successorem imperii, si Dominus ita voluerit, [communi voto] constitui.* (*MGH Cap.* I, 271).
[78] Ibid.
[79] De Jong, *Penitential State*, 26.

the *Divisio Regorum*, the *Ordinatio* clearly establishes one brother ahead of all the others. It sets

Lothar up as the sole emperor, and his brothers, as kings, are to submit to his authority.

Furthermore, they are to bring annual gifts.[80]

Scholars on gift giving have clearly shown not only its economic use, but more

importantly its use in establishing power relations. That Lothar's brothers were to give annual

gifts symbolically placed him in a superior position. Lothar also received the imperial crown as

well as the majority of the Frankish lands, which would have included magnatic support,

resources, and military infrastructure. Louis intended the *Ordinatio* to be much different that the

Divisio, and it was. Through the *Ordinatio*, we can see above all else the changing nature of

imperial authority. Unlike under Charlemagne, where the imperial status was used in tandem

with other honorific titles, under Louis the Pious, the imperial title was the sole title used.

Furthermore, Louis gave the title political legitimacy by associating it directly with the Frankish

realm. The imperial title no longer held only nominal power, but now came with political

resources. The documentary of Louis the Pious' reign shows the increasing authority of the

imperial crown.

In the capitulary evidence of Louis the Pious' reign, we get for the first time a full

expression of the imperial title. Louis' capitularies completely abandon the older titles of the *rex*

Francorum and *rex Langobardorum*. Instead only the imperial title is included along with an

explication of all that title entails. In Louis' first capitulary, *Constitutio de Hispanis in*

Francorum Regnum Profugis Prima (815), the salutation proclaims, "Louis, *imperator augustus*

by divine providence ordaining, to all the faithful of the holy church of God and us, to those

present and likewise in the future, and to those living in the regions of Aquitaine, Septimania,

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[80] *MGH, Cap. I*, 271. *Volumus atque monemus, ut senior frater, quando ad eum aut unus aut ambo fratres sui cum donis, sicut praedictum est, venerint, sicut ei maior potestas Do annuente fuerit adtributa, ita et ipse illos pio fraternoque amore largiori dono remuneret.*

Provence, and Spain."[81] Here Louis associates the title with the various regions of the Frankish realm, many of which had no expressed identity in the documents of Charlemagne and Pepin. In other capitularies, such as the *Capitula Legi Addita* (816), Louis is "*imperator augustus, crowned by divine will and reigning over the empire of the Romans.*"[82] The capitulary evidence thus shows the extent to which the Frankish realm had taken on an imperial identity under Louis the Pious.

Louis the Pious' actions during the early part of his reign, including the creation of the *Ordinatio* and the use of the imperial title alone in capitulary evidence, shows that the Carolingians were trying to implement fully the political authority of the imperial crown. Unlike his father, Louis did not shy away from calling the Carolingian realm an empire, and his commissioning of the *Ordinatio* was an attempt to make it an ongoing reality. Furthermore, the lack of formidable opposition to such a revolutionary document indicates that imperial authority had elicited a great deal of support, either because of its general acceptance or the inability of opponents to oppose it. In any case, in 817 it seemed that the Carolingian empire was on solid ground and Lothar was ruler in waiting. The next two and a half decades, however, would see that empire fall apart. The reasons for such a quick turnaround have grave implications for the strength of the imperial authority and can only be determined by examining the reign of Lothar I, who was the realization of the imperial ideal.

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[81] *MGH Cap. I*: 132, 261. *Hludowicus, divina ordinante providentia imperator augustus, omnibus fidelibus sanctae Dei ecclesiae ac nostris, praesentibus scilicet et futuris, partibus Aquitaniae, Septimaniae, Provinciae, et Hispaniae consistentibus.*

[82] *MGH Cap. I*: 134, 267. *Hludowicus divina nutu coronatus, Romanum regens imperium…* Again, here the concept of Roman has serious Christian overtones.

Chapter III:

LOTHAR, COEMPEROR TO REBEL, 817-834

Lothar has been a controversial figure in Carolingian history. His seizure of power in 833 has colored him as an ungrateful, troublesome son, and the failure of his kingdom, Middle Francia, has made him out to be an ineffective ruler. Though Middle Francia existed for such a short period of time (843-870/5), its ruler should not be overlooked as a critical player in the Carolingian disintegration both before the Treaty of Verdun (843) and after. The tendency in modern scholarship, however, has been to focus on Louis the Pious and his struggle with rebellious magnates or the subsequent reigns of Charles the Bald and Louis the German, as the early beginnings of European state formation. Lothar has only been a matter of concern when discussing the general narrative of events between 828 and 843, primarily focusing on the Frankish Civil War (840-843). For example, Johannes Fried examines Lothar in her chapter in the New Cambridge Medieval History, but she discusses both Middle and East Francia together, giving limited analysis on Lothar before and after 843. Lothar's reign after 843 receives even less attention by Carolingian scholars. His brothers, however, have enjoyed much better analysis.[83] Lothar therefore deserves a closer examination as a critical player in Carolingian political history outside of just the civil war.

The next two chapters provide an extensive look Lothar from his crowning as co-emperor in 817 to his death in 855. These chapters will incorporate a combination of the charter, narrative, and physical sources as well as examine the secondary evidence provided by Carolingian numismatists, diplomatists, and historians. Furthermore, this work will analyze the evidence with a Lothar-centric view in order to gain insight into Lothar's decision making. I

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[83] See Janet Nelson's *Charles the Bald* (Longman Group: London and New York) 1992, and Eric J. Goldberg's *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817-876* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London), 2006 for detailed analysis of the reigns of these two brothers.

will treat other important factors of Carolingian politics, including the role of rebellious

magnates and ideas of unity. Finally, these chapters concludes that we cannot simply consider

Lothar's actions as those of an ungrateful son or the puppet of magnates, but rather they were

the actions of an heir slowly politically threatened and of a co-emperor seeing the turmoil

caused by his counterpart.

Primary Sources

As a result of the short existence of Middle Francia, little narrative evidence exists for

the reign of Lothar I. Much of the existing narrative evidence presents a pro-Louis the Pious or

Charles the Bald view. For instance, two of the most extensive sources, the *Annals of Fulda* and

the *Annals of St. Bertin*, were products of the courts of Charles the Bald and Louis the German,

respectively. Lothar's court never produced an account of his reign. Thus, Lothar-centric

evidence is almost non-existent except for Paschius Radebertus' *Life of Wala*. Radbertus wrote

the life of Wala, the abbot at Corbie who was sent to Italy in 822 by Louis the Pious to aid

Lothar and eventually sided with him in the rebellion of 828. Wala was a powerful and

respected personality at Lothar's court, and his influence must not be overlooked, especially

when looking at ideas of Empire. From the *Life of Wala*, we get one of the few pro-Lothar

views in the primary evidence. The capitulary evidence is also limited and confined to Lothar's

reign in Italy.[84]

Numismatic remains and charter evidence provide a more complete look at the reign of

Lothar and can been used to supplement the lack of narrative sources. Numismatic remains can

be enlightening mostly of the latter half of Lothar's reign after 840. Before this date, coinage is

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[84] On the other hand, there are joint capitularies issued by Louis the Pious and Lothar. This issuing ended in 822 when Lothar was sent to rule in Italy. Lothar continued to issue capitularies from Italy even after 843, which is quite an interesting occurrence considering that Lothar inherited the Frankish heartlands including the much-coveted Aachen. Cabaniss, Allen, trans. *Charlemagne's Cousins: Contemporary Lives of Adalard and Wala*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1967). *MGH Cap. I*, 316-332.

much scarcer for the reign of Lothar, and what was issued was done so by the mints under the direction of Louis the Pious. In fact, Louis the Pious seems to have maintained control over Frankish coinage throughout the Empire, even in areas where his sons ruled.[85] The portrait coinage displays the imperial authority of Lothar and reveals that he continuously dealt with the idea that he was a legitimate political equal to his father.

Charter evidence offers a better look at the early reign of Lothar (817-834). It is particularly helpful for the second and most successful rebellion of Lothar from 833-834, providing a timeline of events separated by a few months or less. For the early reign of Lothar 23 charters issued between 817 and the reinstatement of Louis the Pious in mid-834. Most of the charters discuss the giving of protection or tax exemption to various monasteries, as had been done by Lothar's father and grandfather. Though not particularly revealing, these charters can provide insight not only into bare facts of where Lothar was, what he was doing, when he was doing it, but also into the ways in which Lothar was trying to establish power and legitimacy for his reign. Furthermore, charter evidence shows that in many ways Lothar was not so much trying to break with the Carolingian past, but to emphasize its continuity under his rule. In all, there are over one hundred charters for the reign of Lothar (817-855). The Lothar Psalter is also a source of evidence for the growing imperial authority of the Carolingians (See Fig. 3a). The psalter features an image of Lothar on his imperial throne with the imperial crown and scepter in his hand. Obviously, the psalter featured images of King David, the writer of the psalms. However, this image served dual purpose of praising David and emphasizing Lothar's divinely-appointed authority as emperor.

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[85] Simon Coupland, "Carolingian Single Finds and the Economy of the Early Ninth-Century" in *The Numismatic Chronicle* v. 170, 2010, 287.
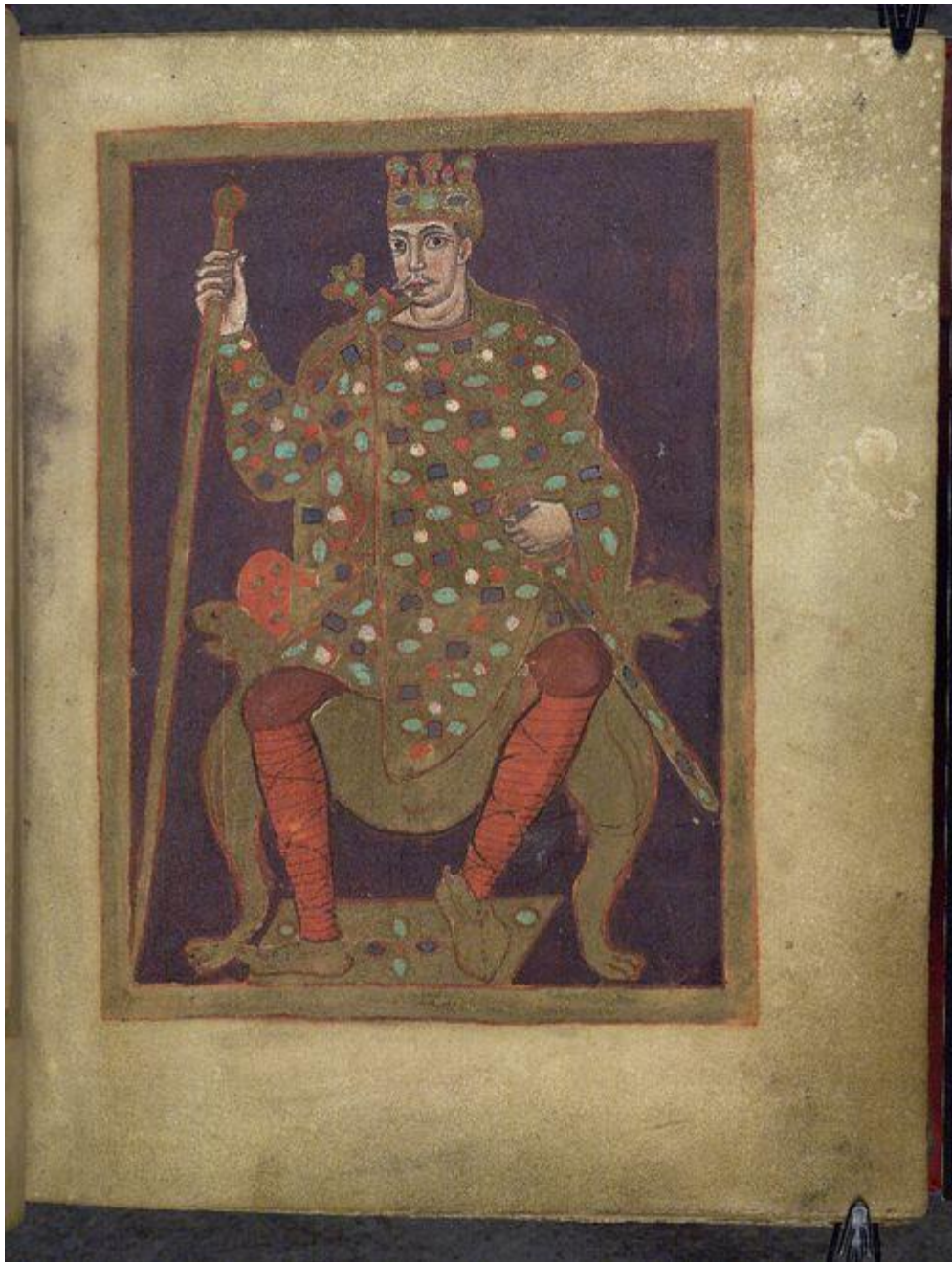
Fig. 3a - Lothar Psalter, Full-page miniature of the Emperor Lothar ,
Germany (Aachen), c. 840-855, Add MS 37768, f. 4r

Secondary Sources

The paucity and focus of the narrative evidence has caused Lothar to be overlooked by

modern scholarship. No monographic work, like that of Janet Nelson's on Charles the Bald or

Eric Goldberg's on Louis the German, exists for Lothar. Through both of these works, Nelson

and Goldberg have provided a closer, more personal view of two influential characters in the development of modern Europe. Newer works, like Mayke de Jong's *Penitential State*, have begun to discuss Lothar more extensively.[86] Though this is only a recent development, and Lothar still remains a secondary concern of such works. The lack of more focused analysis is not the only issue. Lothar is also often vilified. In her work, *Past Convictions*, Susan Booker discusses Lothar within the context of the Field of Lies and shows that Lothar is often remembered, even in modern times, as a divisive and problematic individual.[87] Thus, scholarship either treats Lothar as secondary topic or as a rebellious son who initiated the downfall of the Carolingians. Although this historiographical focus is understandable, given the lack of narrative evidence, we nevertheless must address them. Lothar, however, has received more attention in Carolingian numismatics and diplomatics. Scholars such as Simon Coupland and Elina Screen, have opened up new avenues of evidence for Carolingian scholars to explore. Coupland has conducted extensive analysis of Lothar's coinage, especially post-840, and Screen has to date provided the most comprehensive analysis of Lothar's charters.[88] Screen's work examines the charters of Lothar I and how they reveal his changing status throughout his reign. Screen has shown that the loyalties Lothar had as emperor and how political circumstances grew or diminished those loyalties. The current work will implement and examine much of their findings and consequently is greatly indebted to their groundbreaking works.

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[86] De Jong, Mayke, *Penitential State*, 26.

[87] Courtney Booker, *Past Connections: The Penance of Louis the Pious and the Decline of the Carolingians* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, PA, 2009), p. 121. Booker notes Elisabeth Magnou-Nortier's characterization in 1997 of the Field of Lies as a "Stalinesque type of history," highlighting the fact that Lothar is still pictured as a villain even in modern historiography.

[88] Elina Screen, *The Reign of Lothar I (795-855), Emperor of the Franks, Through the Charter Evidence* (Cambridge: unpublished, 1998). See also Goffart Ganz, "Charters earlier than 800"; Bresslau H., *Handbuch der Urkundeniehre*; E. Muhlbacher, "Die Datierung der Urkunden Lothar I," *Sizungberichte der Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse,* 85 (Wien, 1877).

Lothar's Early Reign (817-828)

Little is known about Lothar's childhood. His mother was Irmengard, Louis the Pious' first wife, and Lothar. It was commonplace to not record the details of a person's birth and early years, even for someone in line to be king. Janet Nelson points out that Charles the Bald is the first ruler in the Middle Ages to have his birthday recorded, and even then he himself ordered this commemoration years after the fact. In 817, wanting to deal with the problematic inheritance of the Frankish Kingdom[89] and establish some sort of continuity, Louis the Pious commissioned the famous document later known as the *Ordinatio Imperii*.[90]

The issuing of the *Ordinatio* was quite an advantageous outcome for Lothar. The *Ordinatio* clearly favored him by giving him almost all of the Frankish lands, including the Frankish heartlands of Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgandy and also Thuringia, Alemannia, Saxony, Frisia, Alsace, and Italy (See Map 3a). Louis also crowned his eldest son, Lothar, co-emperor at Aachen, while his brothers were relegated to the status of kings and had to pay tribute to him yearly.[91] Louis the German was given Bavaria and lands east, and Pepin of Aquitaine received Aquitaine and Gascony.[92] Furthermore his brothers could not wage war outside of their respective kingdoms without Lothar's consent. By making Lothar sole heir to the empire proper, Louis sought to establish a new precedent of unity.[93] Historically, the Frankish realm had suffered from constant internecine warfare because of the persistence of

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[89] Problematic in the sense that partible inheritance had historically been one of the major causes of Frankish political turmoil and division.

[90] Originally called the *Divisio Regnum*. The title *Ordinatio Imperii* is a later alteration.

[91] *MGH*, *Cap.* I: 271.

[92] Ibid. The lands given to Louis the German and Pippin of Aquitaine were newly acquired territory and periphery to Francia proper. See Eric Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 29-32 for more on Louis the German's inheritance.

[93] F.L. Ganshof, "Some Observations on the *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817" in F.L. Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and New York, 1971) trans. by Janet Sondheier, 275-276. Ganshof makes a convincing case for the unitary nature of the *Ordinatio*, arguing from a close examination of the narrative of the events. More recent scholars, however, have begun to question this nature. See Mayke de Jong, *Penitential State: Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge), 26.

partible inheritance, and clearly Louis's division of the empire was intended to reduce or eliminate future warfare. Lothar received unanimous support since no one was willing or able to forcibly oppose the decision. The state of Frankish affairs was strong, and as a result those hostile to the Carolingians were in no position to question the king's decision.[94] Following the *Ordinatio*, Lothar remained with his father, ruling with him jointly. Lothar was engaged in issuing capitularies with his father from 818 to 822 and learned how to conduct the affairs of the state. Lothar ruled Bavaria at least on name before from 814 to 817. By 822 Lothar had undoubtedly proven himself enough that his father sent him to rule Italy. Virtually all of the extant capitulary evidence from Lothar's reign comes from Italy. This fact indicates that Italy remained one of Lothar's most important bases of power, which later ensured him papal support, especially at the Field of Lies in 833. Nevertheless, by 822 Lothar possessed immense power in the form of both land and title, and all indications were that nothing would change. Then in 823, the birth of Charles the Bald through the entire inheritance plan in disarray.

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[94] Rosamond McKitterick has contended that scholars who argue for magnate support of the unity of the empire do not recognize the presence of those in opposition to the Carolingians. Source?

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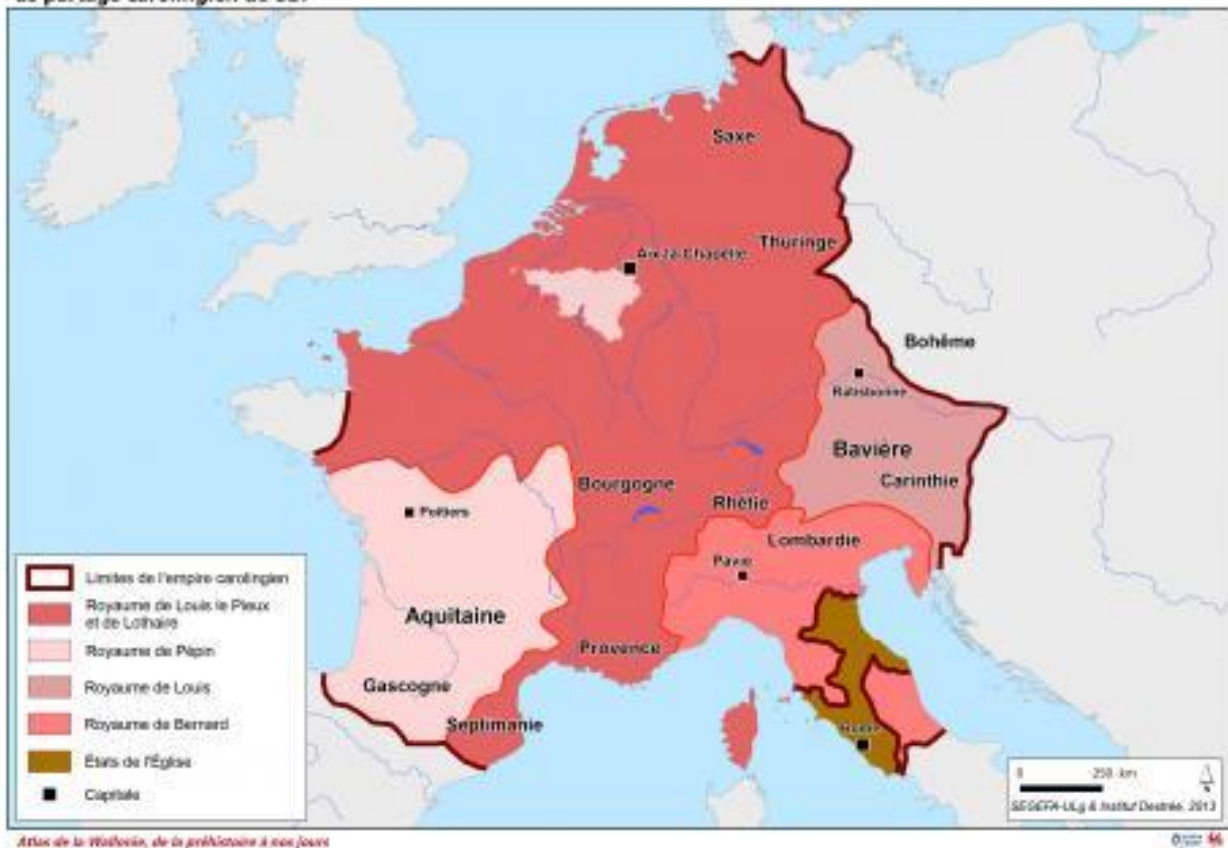
Map 3a – The Division of the Empire according to the *Ordinatio* (817)

In 823, Judith of Bavaria, Louis the Pious' second wife, gave birth to Charles, later

called the Bald. Louis had married Judith four years earlier after the death of his first wife

Irmengard. Janet Nelson says that Charles must have been the realization of the Lothar's fears

since Louis' second marriage. [95] With the birth of Charles, Louis faced a dilemma. The

chronicler Nithard says that "Louis did not know what to do for him [Charles] since he had

already divided the whole empire among his other sons."[96] Obviously, Louis wished to give

something to his newborn son for he gave him a royal name. However, the *Ordinatio* was

already in place and was, for all intents and purposes, a binding document. Giving lands to

Charles meant taking them from another son. To ensure peace and an inheritance for Charles,

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[95] Janet Nelson's *Charles the Bald* (Longman Group: London and New York) 1992.
[96] Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* c. *MGH SSRG.* (1907), 44:3. *Cumque anxius pater pro filio rogaret…*

Louis sought the consent of Lothar and his brothers before amending the *Ordinatio.*. According to *Royal Frankish Annals*, Lothar agreed that Louis should "give Charles whatever part of the kingdom he wished."[97] Here the annals are suspect. The annals were a product of those associated with the palace court and highly biased in favor of Louis. By creating the scenario of Lothar giving unconditional consent to a redistribution of the lands of the Empire, the annalist is able to place all blame on Lothar for his subsequent rebellion against Charles and Louis. It is highly unlikely that Lothar would have had no concern for what part of the kingdom Charles received and thus would have wanted to be a part of making that decision. To be sure, Louis consulted Lothar on the matter, and we can only guess at what was discussed. As a result of these negotiations, Lothar became the godfather of his step-brother. However, the fact that Lothar was Charles' godfather must have put Lothar somewhat at ease for the time being, and thus it is arguable that Lothar agreed to some sort of inheritance for Charles. Either way, Louis did not give any land to Charles until 829, an act that added to Louis' mounting problems.

The narrative sources offer little on Lothar's early reign between 822 and his rebellion in 829. A look at the charter evidence and what little numismatic evidence remains can provide better detail of Lothar's actions in Italy during the 820s. When Louis sent Lothar to Italy in 822, Lothar immediately began to build his influence and power there. Italy was the one province that would remain under Lothar's jurisdiction throughout his entire reign, and as a result, proving to be his greatest and most secure source of power. For example, it would play a significant part in securing the support of Pope Gregory VI at the Field of Lies in 833. Lothar arrived in Italy in 822, and Pope Gregory crowned Lothar as co-emperor, a sign of the continual Franco-papal alliance.

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[97]Ibid. *…tandem Lodharius consensit ac sacramento testatus est, ut portionem regni quam vellet eidem pater daret…*

To commemorate his son's coronation, Louis had a new series of portrait coinage struck. The coinage was in the style of Louis' *religio* series (See Fig. 3b). The fact that Lothar's image is surrounded by the inscription "*LOTHARIVS IMPERATO*R" is significant because it provides a context for dating the coins. Simon Coupland has argued that Lothar's portrait series mostly likely dates to 822/823, citing the use of *IMPERATOR* as a commemoration of Lothar's coronation in Italy.[98] However, the title *IMPERATOR* could also be associated with Lothar's seizure of power in 833. In fact, though the coronation over Italy was significant, Lothar had used the title *IMPERATOR* since his coronation as co-emperor in 817. Although Coupland ultimately settles on 822/3 as the accurate date, what is important to note is that since 817 Lothar was continuously engaged with the idea that he was a legitimate *co*-emperor. In 822, his coronation as emperor, not king, of Italy reinforced this idea. This is not to say that he was an actual equal to Louis the Pious. Louis controlled the majority of Frankish lands and infrastructure, and his position as head of the family structure, which was supposed to be mirrored in the political structure, also placed Louis in the superior position. However, through the *Ordinatio*, Lothar was theoretically a political equal to Louis, an idea that must be examined when looking at the motives behind and context of Lothar's rebellions.

Fig. 3b – Coinage from Louis the Pious' *religio* series, bearing the inscription
Christiana Religio

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[98] Simon Coupland, "The Coinage of Lothar I (840-855)" in *The Numismatic Chronicle* v. 161, 2001, 161.

All of Lothar's early reign was spent in Italy, where he built up his power networks with the various monasteries. Lothar issued most of his charters to northern monasteries, although Elina Screen shows that he issued charters to southern monasteries as well.[99] In both cases, a majority of the charters are confirmation of various benefits, such as tax exemptions and protection. Of the five extant charters from 822 to 825, excluding the *Depredita*, three are confirmatory charters. Lothar issued Charters 2 and 3 to the monastery of Como and Charter 5 to Farfa, both which were northern monasteries. Farfa and Como were two of the most important monasteries for Lothar. Five of the twenty-three charters from 822 to 834/5 were issued to these two sites. Through the confirmatory charters, Lothar not only established control over these monasteries but also tapped into the authority of the Carolingian past. These charters were issued in the same way that his father and grandfather had issued charters before him, and he surely played on the concept of continuity to stress his legitimacy as sole ruler of Italy and later as ruler of the Carolingian Empire. The charter evidence stops in 825, a few years before Lothar's initial rebellion. It would seem that Lothar had made all the relevant connections to Italian monasteries through charters. The capitulary evidence does show that he was busy issuing joint capitularies with his father. Conversely, Lothar's charters during his sole reign in 833-834 do not mention Louis the Pious at all. Lothar was sole heir to the imperial throne, and he was establishing himself as an effective ruler in Italy, learning through hands-on experience how to lead. Furthermore, as the godfather of Charles the Bald and second in the Empire, Lothar appeared to not have a problem with the possibility of Charles' inheritance. Moreover, Lothar still included the name of his father in the charters he issued. The direction of the

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[99] Elina Screen, *The Reign of Lothar I (795-855), Emperor of the Franks, Through the Charter Evidence* (Cambridge: unpublished, 1998), 170.

Empire, however, abruptly shifted in 828, not at the hands of Lothar but at the hands of his father.

Louis's reign before the 820s was relatively peaceful. He made a smooth transition into power primarily because all his brothers predeceased him, after which point Charlemagne named him his heir and had him crowned co-emperor. The inability of the opponents of the *Ordinatio* to effectively oppose it further highlights Louis' unquestionable authority.[100] By 827, however, problems began to appear. A Muslim force attacked and sacked the city of Barcelona, which Louis himself had been a part of taking. Louis had sent two forces under the command of Hugh of St. Tours, one of the most powerful men in Francia and father-in-law of Lothar, along with Manfred of Orleans to aid the besieged city. These forces failed to prevent the capture of a city that Louis himself had a hand in taking. This military setback along with the fact that Louis had done relatively little to expand the boundaries of the empire threatened his prowess as a war leader. Despite the effects of Christianity on the Franks, the military ethos remained a strong dynamic of socio-political relations. Louis' ineptness as a military leader would have posed problems for his image a ruler of the Frankish people. As a result, Louis attempted to reassert his authority by depriving Manfred and Hugh of their benefices. Louis accused Manfred and Hugh of delaying their response, allowing for the sack of Barcelona. As a result, Louis needed a scapegoat to reassert his authority, and blaming Manfred and Hugh provided just that. The question of why Louis saw the need to react so aggressively, especially against such powerful men in the Empire, is easily answered. The sack of Barcelona was at the hands of a Muslim force, enemies of the Christian faith. Memories of the Muslim excursion into Frankish territory in the previous century were not that far removed from the Frankish mindset. Barcelona also

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[100] Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy*, 274. Ganshof discusses the deliberations of over the *Ordinatio* and shows that there were those opposed to the document and supported a more traditional division of the realm.

held special significance for Louis himself since he was credited with its capture. "The Astronomer" claims that "As was fitting, they devised an honorable plan and summoned the king so that a city of such renown would enhance the king's glorious reputation by actually being taken while he was there."[101] Lastly, Spain represented one of the last profitable frontiers for Carolingian military expansion. Timothy Reuter has argued that the slowing and ultimate halt of Carolingian expansion predetermined the end of the Carolingian Empire. Without the spoils and new benefices acquired through conquest, internal fighting became more likely. While Reuter's thesis may ignore other factors, such as Louis the Pious' inability to deal with the problems of inheritance after 829, it nevertheless addresses a serious issue in Louis the Pious' reign.[102]

Another problem mounting for Louis came in 829 when he gave Charles the Bald a share of the Carolingian inheritance. According to the contemporary author Thegan, "He [Louis] gave to his son Charles, who was born of Judith Augusta, the land of Alemannia and Rhaetia and a certain part of Burgundy. He did this in the presence of his sons Lothar and Louis. Henceforth, they were outraged, along with their brother Pippin."[103] Here again Thegan may be exaggerating Lothar's anger. Lothar had probably agreed to some inheritance for Charles back in 823. However, Louis had also recently made Bernard of Septimania the guardian of Charles the Bald as well as second in the empire. This move shows Bernard's rising prospects and importance in the court of Louis the Pious. It also indicates that Louis likely recognized the rift that he created between himself and Lothar. The ceremony for establishing a godparent was

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[101] "The Astronomer," *The Life of Emperor Louis* in Thomas Noble's *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and The Astronomer* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 237-238.

[102] Timothy Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 35, 1985.

[103] Thomas F.X. Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious: Lives by Einhard, Notker, Ermoldus, Thegan, and the Astronomer* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 208.

quite lavish, being accompanied by gifts, and represented a spiritual and earthly bond between

godparent and godchild. The fact that godparenthood was intended to last the lifetime of both

individuals makes Louis' act all the more egregious. Louis had broken the bond between

godparent and godchild, a bond created not only between the two, but also with God.[104] Thus,

this action likely angered Lothar more than concession of lands to Charles, especially

considering that the lands conceded were insignificant and Lothar's imperial title was never

threatened. However, Lothar was losing influence not only with Louis but Charles as well as

Lothar's position was clearly threatened by the rising status of his half-brother.

As a result of these aggressive actions, Lothar undoubtedly began to wonder if he should

act. Louis was threatening his influence, and what would prevent Louis from giving Charles

more lands in the future, especially since Judith was one of Louis' highly influential advisors.

On the other hand, the Carolingian concept of filial loyalty bound Lothar in loyal service to his

father. Given these two competing influences, Lothar certainly wrestled with what to do about

his father's recent moves. There was though another factor. Louis had already angered Hugh

and others who now sought to overthrow him, for they believed he had overstepped his

authority and was threatening the integrity of the Empire. Thus, in 829, Hugh sought Lothar's

help. Carolingian scholars have argued that Hugh was the deciding influence in Lothar's

decision to rebel. However, this view ignores the agency of Lothar and the fact that the ousting

of Hugh was a direct threat to his authority. As Lothar's father-in-law, Hugh was a part of his

power base, and any threat, such as a loss of benefices, was a direct threat to Lothar himself.

Thus, Lothar did not need Hugh to convince him of the severity of Louis' actions. Lothar felt

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[104] For more on godparenthood in the early Middle Ages see Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

them personally, and though Hugh may have started the discussion, Lothar's decision was just as much a result of his own pragmatism as it was of Hugh's appeal.

Finally, in August of 829, Lothar[105] decided to rebel. He had a great following, even his brothers, who had lost much to him in the *Ordinatio*, sided with him. In fact, Pippin of Aquitaine actually carried out the initial phase of the rebellion. Nevertheless, that Lothar was the revolt's leader is clear from the fact that even after Pippin and the rebel forces had already ensured the success of the revolt, Lothar assumed control upon his arrival in 830. Lothar immediately took the reins by virtue of his imperial title and authority, and in 830, he captured Louis, Judith, and Charles. The large following that Lothar was able to obtain is indicative of the success that his father had had in establishing him as his successor. This success is further evidenced by Lothar's brothers who certainly were not happy about losing land and status to him through the *Ordinatio*. By virtue of the *Ordinatio,* Lothar wielded considerable power in the form of vast amounts of land, a commodity which provided him with military infrastructure, wealth, and manpower.

Lothar may have been dependent on his magnates for his military power, but he also gave legitimacy to their cause. It is important not to overlook the legitimacy that Lothar gave to the rebellion of 828, especially when considering who was responsible for it. Rosamond McKitterick has argued that the sons of Louis the Pious were simply useful tools in the hands of the magnates.[106] Lothar though was not simply a political tool with no agency of his own, but

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[105] Ibid, 208-209. Thegan places the blame on Louis's son, Pepin, saying "His son Pippin met him there [Compiègne] along with his father's chief magnates, and many other faithless ones. They wished to deprive the lord emperor of his rule," Thegan goes on to claim that Louis the German stopped the rebellion, however, Nithard says that the all sons were complicit in it. Furthermore, Eric Goldberg proves in his *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817-876*, that Louis the German had a great deal of animosity towards his father and his brother Lothar. However, Lothar had great support, and in all likelihood Louis the German was involved in the rebellion as well.

[106] Rosamond McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians 751-987* (Burnt Mill, UK: Longman Group Limited, 1983), 170-171.

rather hed considered the threats against his *fideles* (i.e. Manfred and Hugh) a direct threat to himself. The concerns of those that formed his powerbase constituted much of his own concerns. Furthermore the rebellion needed Lothar's support to add to its legitimacy. Legitimacy for any rebellion was crucial. Even the Carolingians sought the legitimizing support of the pope in their coup d'état in 751, and they continued to reiterate their legitimacy as rulers even after the successful coup. It is true that magnates pressured[107] Lothar to rebel, but his relationship with these magnates was by no means one sided, as McKitterick has argued.[108] Furthermore, as already proven, Lothar had a vested personal interest in the rebellion, since he was continually losing influence with his father and step-brother.

Lothar's Rebellion Continues: 830-834

Despite the immediate success of 829-830, Lothar was unable to consolidate his victory. Unlike his second rebellion in 833, the rebellion of 829 did not lead to administrative production, such as charter or capitulary output, nor did Lothar have time to begin new coinage production. There is no portrait coinage to commemorate his ascension to the throne, indicating that such an ascension probably did not occur. Furthermore, Lothar issued his next set of charters, which were confirmatory, in March of 830 to February of 832 to the Italian monasteries of Sesto, Nonatola, and Farfa. The inclusion of Farfa likely indicates that Lothar was trying to reestablish old relations with these monasteries after the failure of his coup d'état. Nithard, however, moralizes the events of 829 by claiming all did as they saw fit[109], but his account has already been shown to be an attempt to discredit Lothar. The more likely scenario is

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[107] Lothar's father-in-law, Hugh of St. Tours, along with others, such as Manfred of Orleans pressured Lothar to rebel and retake their benefices.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* c. *MGH SSRG.* (1907), 44:3. Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 131.

that Lothar simply achieved military victory, which he was unable to parlay into seizure of political power. Thus, whereas Nithard attempts to implicate Lothar as a poor administrator or ruler, the evidence seems to indicate that Lothar likely never gained full control of the empire in the first place. The reason for his inability to seize power effectively is that after offering greater inheritance to his younger sons, Louis regained their support, and they in turn reinstated him. Here again we can see that the sons of Louis the Pious were not mere tools in the hands of magnates, but could sway political outcome. Thus, Louis regained control in 831 and immediately sought to punish Lothar for his rebellion and completely redrew the lines of inheritance.[110] Lothar lost all of his holdings except for Italy, to where he was essentially banished. Initially, the rebellious magnates were sentenced to death, but Louis reduced their sentence. Louis would later reconcile with Lothar, an action which Eric Goldberg says angered Louis the German, who now saw that Louis would not uphold the new division of lands.[111] As a result of the reconciliation between his father and older brother, Louis the German rebelled in 832.

During Louis the German's rebellion, Louis the Pious again calculated disastrously by giving Charles the region of Aquitaine.[112] Aquitaine belonged to Louis's son, Pippin, and taking it was an aggressive action on Louis's part. Thus, Charles the Bald proved yet again to be a point of contention among Louis and his other sons, and in 833, Lothar and his brothers united in rebellion against their father with the backing of many magnates. Both sides met near the Alsatian plain of Rotfeld in November. Though he initially had significant support, Louis saw

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[110] The new lines of inheritance divided the empire much like Charlemagne's *Divisio Regnum* and emphasized filial loyalty.
[111] Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 65-66.
[112] See Brian Pullan, *Sources for The History of Medieval Europe from the mid-eighth to mid-thirteenth century* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1966), 39.

his forces melt away when, on the eve of battle, Pope Gregory IV sided with Lothar.[113] The

sources are silent on the reasons for Gregory supporting Lothar, but Lothar's control of Italy

might have meant Gregory thought it better to have an ally rather than an enemy as a neighbor.

It is further arguable that Gregory recognized a shifting of power in favor of Lothar. The pope

himself proved to be a part of that shift; for after he gave Lothar his support, Louis' forces

began to desert him. Nithard claims that Louis' supporters deserted him in one night, and that he

ordered those who remained to go to his son in order to save themselves. However, this is likely

dramatization of the events to emphasize Lothar and his supporters' betrayal and Louis the

Pious's benevolence. After Louis's men deserted him, Lothar captured and imprisoned him and

sent Judith to the monastery. Later writers would come to call these events at Rotfeld the "Field

of Lies."[114]

The very name, "Field of Lies," indicates the severity and lasting memory of what

transpired in November 833. Louis the Pious's betray by his sons was not something to be taken

lightly. It was unprecedented in breaking the bonds of filial loyalty, an intricate part of Frankish

culture, and by forcibly taking the crown, Lothar threw into chaos the norms of dynastic

succession. However, the betrayal was more than just the taking of power; it belittled the

emperor Louis. The participants at Rotfeld forced Louis to surrender his sword, a symbol of his

right to command and hold power. Taking Louis the Pious' sword was akin to the blinding of

dethroned Byzantine emperors. Louis also had to admit to a list of faults. A group of bishops

who supported the rebellion later composed and enumerated these list of faults in the *Relatio*

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[113] Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, in MGH *SRL*.
[114] See Courtney M. Booker's *Past Convictions* on the Field of Lies and its representation in historiography.

Compendiensis. These faults included Louis' continuous divisions of the Empire that caused his sons to war against not only him but also each other.[115]

The list of grievances gives us clues about those who supported the rebellion and the rebellion's "official" cause. Scholars have tended to reject the desire to protect a united realm as the real cause for rebellion.[116] Instead, they cite the self-interest of magnates. I will not argue these scholars on this point. For it is certain that the magnates involved in the rebellions of 828 and 833 were self-interested, especially when considering that many of them had lost much because of Louis the Pious's actions. Nevertheless, this fact does not negate the point that the rebels still needed to package their cause in certain culturally-acceptable terms. For that reason, the idea of empire and unity played a real part in the events of 828 to 833. The rebellious magnates used the idea of unity and empire to hide their own interests,[117] and more importantly the use of these concepts legitimized their cause.[118] Lothar's participation in the rebellions further added to the rebels' cause as well as to their claim that they fought for the empire. Magnates supporting the rebellion, which by the time of Louis' betrayal at the 'Field of Lies' would have been almost everyone in the Empire, would have at least been familiar with the sentiments expressed in the *Relatio Compendiensis*, which was intended to encapsulate the reasons for the rebellion. These reasons specifically included the continuous divisions of the Empire under Louis. These divisions began with the disruption of the *Ordinatio*.

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[115] Latin text in C.M. Booker, "The Public Penance of Louis the Pious: A New Edition of the *Episcoporum de poenitentia, quam Hludowicus imperator professus est, relation Compendiensis* [833]," *Viator* 39, no. 2 (2008), 1-19.

[116] See Rosamond McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 170-171. See Arthur Kleinclausz, *L'Empire Carolingien: Ses Origines et Ses Transformations* (Paris: Librarie Hachette, 1902), 263-280 for an argument for the idea of empire as the motivating factor behind the rebellions of 828 and 830.

[117] Though this point does not preclude the fact that some of the magnates could have actually seen Louis' actions as detrimental not only to their own success but the empire's as well.

[118] The *Relatio Comp.* expressed the reason for Lothar's rebellion and explicitly discussed the constant divisions of the realm created by Louis the Pious.

Mayke de Jong, however, has questioned the *Ordinatio*'s commitment to unity, which would place this entire point in jeopardy.[119] In other words, the *Ordinatio*'s inclusion in the list of grievances could just have been an accusation of oath-breaking rather than an accusation of threatening the unity of the empire. There are two problems with this view. First, though the *Ordinatio* was styled in the same way as Charlemagne's *Divisio Regnorum*, in that it was also originally called a *divisio* and gave lands to all sons, it made significant breaks with the precedent of the *Divisio*. The *Ordinatio* gave a majority of the Frankish lands, including the heartlands, to Lothar. It also gave him the imperial crown, which along with the fact that his brothers were subjected to his control, emphasized him as their overlord. Thus, unlike the *Divisio*, the *Ordinatio* did not emphasize confraternal rule. It emphasized subordination to the emperor while still allowing all the heirs to control their own subkingdom. Second, the fact that the disruption of the *Ordinatio* is directly tied to the turmoil and division that followed indicates that the document embodied the peace and unity of the Carolingian Empire. Thus, Louis' sons and the rebellious magnates used the idea of empire, which Louis himself had espoused in 817, against him at the Field of Lies in 833.

History has not shown Lothar's rebellion in a positive light. This fact is of course representative of the old adage, "history is written by the victors." History has painted Lothar as an ungrateful, hostile son betraying his forgiving father.[120] The contemporary sources, such as Nithard, played heavily on the trope of filial loyalty, emphasizing the traditional roles of father and son, while showing how Lothar at every turn subverts those roles. The Field of Lies says much about the image of what Lothar did at Rotfeld. However, we must look at the events of

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[119] De Jong, *Penitential State*, 26.
[120] See Courtney Booker, *Past Convictions*. Booker discusses the historiography of the Field of Lies. Also, Walafrid Strabo's later foreword to the *Relatio Comp.* expressed the betrayal at the Field of Lies on the part of Lothar and his supporters.

833 in another way. From the very beginning of his rulership in Italy, and even before, Lothar had been underpinned with the idea that he was the legitimate ruler of the Carolingian Empire. Louis' *Ordinatio* placed Lothar on equal political footing with Louis. It is true that when he rebelled Lothar was subverting the traditional familial roles, which the political order mirrored. However, while enemies of Lothar would have been emphasizing his disregard for these roles, he would have emphasized his political authority derived from the *Ordinatio*. That is arguably one of the reasons why those at the Field of Lies included it in the list of grievances against Louis. Lothar was emphasizing his equality with Louis and, given Louis' incompetence and aggressive actions of late, his right to overtake the empire. Thus, his actions cannot be simply reduced to those of an ungrateful son, but rather they were the actions of a partner slowly pushed to the political fringes and of a co-emperor seeing the turmoil caused by his counterpart.

Following 833, the account of the annals of St. Bertin show Lothar to be acting very much like the Carolingian Emperor. He held assemblies, conducted business with the pope, and ruled from Aachen. Lothar issued almost half of the twenty-three charters of his early reign during this period. There are a few key characteristics of these charters that indicate Lothar's strategy to retain power. First, beginning in October 833 with his charter for St. Denis, he began numbering the charters according to his reign as emperor. This numbering continued until April 834 when Louis regained power. Second, these charters do not mention Louis the Pious at all. Lothar ruled alone, not jointly with his father, who had been declared by the events of November 833 unfit for rule. Third, Lothar issued these charters in the Frankish heartlands only, focusing on the most prestigious monasteries, such as St. Denis, Hornbach, St. Victor, and Saint-Genis Fontaines. Lothar was bringing the empire under his control. Elina Screen has

called the reign of Lothar "a new political order."[121] Screen is ambiguous about what she means by "new." She likely simply referring to the fact that there was a change in rulership. Nevertheless, Lothar was doing through these charters was not creating a new political order, but rather emphasizing the continuity of an old one. There were no changes in the political mechanisms at work. The charters were simply an emphasis on the fact that Lothar was now the ruler of the Carolingian Empire. Much like the Carolingians had tried to erase the memory of their coup d'état in 751, Lothar was trying to refocus the attention of the Franks on his right to rule.

Lothar, though, was too aggressive for his brothers' taste. Following the successful coup, he, according to Nithard, tried to take the entire empire for himself, and this, as is to be expected, upset his brothers. It is not a stretch to think that Lothar promised his brothers some sort of land arrangements. After all, Louis the German had rebelled first in anger over Louis the Pious' refusal to uphold the new lines of inheritance in 834. Furthermore, it would not be suprising if Lothar tried to keep the majority of the Frankish lands for himself. He would have wanted to reestablish the arrangements of the *Ordinatio* as much as possible. The fact that the Louis had redrawn the lines of inheritance following Lothar's rebellion and that the brothers had been able to sway political outcome in the past must have emboldened them to demand more than what the *Ordinatio* had given them. As a result, they, supposedly angry about the harsh prison conditions in which Lothar had kept their father, moved toward Aachen to confront Lothar. According to the *Annals of St. Bertin,* the convergence of Louis the German and Pepin's forces frightened Lothar, and he retreated, leaving his father behind. Lothar's support soon dwindled, and though he conducted a few raids, one of which resulted in the burning of Chalon-

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[121] Screen, *The Reign of Lothar I*, 202.

Sur-Saône, he eventually surrendered to his father. Louis again forgave his son and allowed him to return to Italy.

Despite the narrative evidence, the tumultuous period from 828 to 834/5 cannot simply be considered the result of a rebellious, ungrateful son. The annals and other contemporary sources had a vested interest in vilifying Lothar, and, as the ultimate loser of what Goldberg has called the "Struggle for Empire," Lothar never had a chance to commit his side to writing. However, through an examination of the narrative, charter, capitulary, and numismatic evidence, we can see that Lothar rebelled for many reasons. He was losing influence with his father and half-brother. He was supposed to be a political equal to Louis the Pious. His father's aggressive actions were arguably placing the integrity of the empire at risk. Thus, in his mind and of those who supported him, he was doing what was needed. Even if the cynic says that Lothar and his magnates acted for self-interested reasons, such a simplistic answer does not suffice. Lothar had to weigh many options when it came to rebelling against his father. Furthermore, what solely self-interested reasons could have motivated Lothar enough to rebel in 828? He was already co-emperor and heir to almost the entire empire. Lothar must have seen Louis' actions before 828 as problematic not only for himself but also for others in the empire. No matter the case, his bid for power ultimately failed. Lothar relinquished power shortly after issuing is last charter in the heartlands in April 834. The job now was to reconcile in some fashion with his father and to try to salvage whatever aspects he could from the tarnished *Ordinatio*.

CHAPTER IV:

THE DREAM SLIPS AWAY: LOTHAR AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE CAROLINGIAN EMPIRE, 835-855

The second half of Lothar's reign (835-855) was a period of political upheaval and ultimate decline for Lothar. His failed coup eliminated any real chance of seizing the empire, and his ultimate loss during the Frankish civil war completely crushed it. With the Treaty of Verdun Lothar lost any chance at establishing himself as head of the Carolingian empire. His brothers gained independent authority in their own realms, and their political networking in their kingdoms ensured that Lothar would not be able regain authority over their realms. Lothar's truncated kingdom would face onslaught from Viking incursions, the growing power of Charles the Bald, and the loss of outside support. Despite these problems as well as a weakening internal economy, Lothar maintained political stability in his realm until his death. Therefore, from the years following the coup of 833, it becomes clear that though Lothar faced continuous setbacks and unfortunate circumstances, he proved himself to be a resilient ruler.

Following Lothar's coup of 833, Louis the Pious quarantined him within the province of Italy. The *AB* claim Louis granted Lothar Italy, a certain act of forgiveness.[122] However, the reality was that Lothar posed less of a threat in Italy. Louis further allowed Lothar to return with many of his followers, obviously wishing to soothe relations. Louis, however, never revisited the issue of the *Ordinatio* as he had done with Lothar's first rebellion. Following the rebellion of 829, Louis had revoked the *Ordinatio*. Later he backtracked to the chagrin of Louis the German. Louis did not see the need to discuss the issue again following the successful rebellion of 833/4. Louis' lack of concern is a possible sign that no one other than Lothar still saw the *Ordinatio* as a viable document. Lothar would spend the next seven years confined primarily to

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[122] Janet Nelson, trans. *Annals of St. Bertin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 31.

Italy. Looking at his actions there can help us better understand his stance towards Louis and his designs for the empire.

The In-Between Years: 835-839

The relationship between Louis and Lothar remained quite strained during the first years following the coup of 833. Despite the attempts of the *AB* annalist to smooth over the tension, mostly in Louis' favor, Lothar's actions were not quickly forgiven. Lothar was also obstinate in dealing with his father. For instance, in 836, he seems to have refused to meet with his father at Worms, where Louis the Pious had intended to reestablish the boundaries of his and his son's political relationship. According to both the *AB* and the *AF*, Lothar fell ill and could not make it to the meeting. However, it is tempting to see Lothar's "sickness" as an attempt to avoid meeting his father. Further incriminating of Lothar is his refusal the same year to return benefices in Italy to a group of counts, bishops, and other leading men who had remained faithful to Louis. The *AB* records Lothar's response to his father's envoys, saying, "To all this Lothar replied through orders given to his envoys that he could not agree on every point, and he suggested some alternative terms."[123] There is no indication in the charter, capitulary, or narrative evidence that Lothar ever carried out any part of his father's wishes. In other words, there is no indication that Lothar ever returned the benefices of his father's *fideles*. Thus, Lothar's actions after 834 show him to be quite non-reconciliatory. His obstinacy or, at the very least, reluctance shows that he may have lost the empire but he was not going to lose his hold on Italy. Thus, he fought to ensure that his own *fideles* would remain in power throughout the province.

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[123] Ibid., 35.

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The narrative evidence also shows the years of 834 to 838 to be problematic for Lothar, mainly in the way of lost support. In 836, a plague broke out in Francia, claiming many of Lothar's key advisors and *fideles*. First Abbot Wala of Corbie died at the end of 836. Wala had been a key advisor to Lothar, and his loss was significant.[124] Following Wala's death, Lambert, count of Nantes, and Hugh of St. Tours, whom the *AB* records as two of Lothar's greatest supporters, died as well.[125] Hugh, Lothar's father-in-law, had formed a large part of Lothar's power base in Alsace and Bavaria and had been a key advisor to him in revolting against his father. These losses surely had an effect on Lothar's subsequent reign. Their advice and support were crucial during Lothar's coup and would have been much valued in the Frankish Civil Wars.

Surviving diplomata from 834 to 836 reveal that Lothar was mainly concerned with the northern portion of his Italian province. The majority of his charters were issued from Pavia, Lothar's administrative capital in Italy, and mostly concerned northern Italian monasteries and churches. It appears that for Lothar the years following the coup were business as usual. Northern Italy had always been the center of Lothar's administrative efforts in the province. However, Pavia seems to take on a more prominent role. Of the nineteen charters issued between 834 and 840, eleven were issued from Pavia with the rest issued from other royal estates, such as Aureola and Corteolona. Under the Lombards, Pavia had been the administrative center of Italy. The significance of its increased use as administrative center under Lothar, especially after the coup of 834, should not be overlooked. Failing to keep the empire under his control, Lothar still retained his status in Italy. The increased use of Pavia for

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[124] Ibid., 36. MGH*Tunc etiam Walo abba, cuius consiliis Hlotharius plurimum utebatur, in Italia obiit.*
[125] Thegans's *Life of Louis the Pious* records others, including Manfrid of Orleans who had revolted with Lothar and had been one of his greatest supporters. Louis the Pious had used Manfrid and Hugh as scapegoats in the loss of Barcelona to Muslims in 828.

charter production shows Lothar continuing to rule with an imperial mindset. His charters and capitularies continue to use the imperial title.

There is no capitulary evidence for Lothar's reign between 832 and 846. Reasons for this absence are not immediately obvious. The initial response would be to take the lack of capitulary evidence as a sign of Lothar's restricted power after 834. However, this response does not explain why there is no capitulary evidence following Louis' death in 840 until three years after the Treaty of Verdun in 843. Nevertheless, at least for the years before 840, Lothar's power seems to have remained restricted, a fact born out in the capitulary evidence.

The years 834 to 837 are clearly ill-represented in the primary sources, making elucidating Lothar's actions and decisions difficult. The *AF* are almost silent on Lothar with only 836 discussing a sickness that delayed him from attending his father's general assembly at Thionville. Only the charter evidence provides some indication as to Lothar's actions within Italy. These appear to be limited to dealing with north Italian affairs and an increased use of Pavia. Thus, it seems little to nothing of import was occurring within Italy; Lothar was reasserting his authority in the Italian province. However, by 838, the relationship with his father had changed. Louis the Pious and Lothar met and reconciled at Worms.[126] There is no indication[127] that Lothar or his father made an attempt to reconcile before 838/9. In fact, the refusal or at least the delay by Lothar in reinstituting his father's *fideles* in 835 indicates that the two remained distant. By 838/9, however, political circumstances made reconciliation a pertinent step for Louis the Pious. Louis the German was proving troublesome enough for his father to raise an army and cross the Rhine to confront him. Shortly thereafter, Louis reconciled with Lothar. Clearly, despite his previous confrontations with his father, Lothar was still Louis'

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[126] *MGH Post pascha vero mense Maio Wormatiam veniens Hluthario filio suo de Italia in fidem eius venienti reconciliatur …*

[127] This is primarily based upon the absence of evidence for any attempt at reconciliation before 838 in the sources.

best hope for establishing peace and stability for the realm. The only problem for Lothar was that reconciliation came with a price, the division of the empire and an elevated position for Charles the Bald.

In late 838/9, Louis the Pious gave Charles the Bald "the greater part of the Belgic provinces."[128] Although the pro-Charles and Louis the Pious source, Annals of St. Bertin, say that Louis the German agreed to this, the events of the following year point to the probability that Lothar's "agreement" was coerced and insincere.[129] The *Annals of St. Bertin* go on to say that Louis the German secretly consorted with Lothar but took an oath before the emperor saying that there was nothing nefarious about the discussions.[130] However, shortly after this time, Louis the Pious deprived Louis the German of his other lands after a "great argument, quite different from what ought to have happened."[131] Although the details of what transpired during this meeting are sparse, it was enough of an argument to cause much damage between Louis the Pious and Louis the German. Louis the German rebelled against his father who by this time was on his deathbed and feared that Charles would be in danger.[132] Eric Goldberg claims that Louis the German revolted in response to Lothar being made Charles' protector.[133] However, Nithard positions Louis' revolt in early 839 before Lothar was made Charles' protector.[134] Nithard's account implies that this decision was made in response to his revolt. Furthermore, the *Annals of St-Bertin*, say that an argument between Louis and his father occurred in late 838, just prior to Louis' revolt and just after Charles had received the Belgic

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[128] Nelson, trans., *Annals of St. Bertin*, 38.
[129] Ibid, 38-39. Louis the German revolted within a year of the Belgic provinces being given to Charles the Bald.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid, 39. It is possible that the argument was over Louis the Pious giving the Belgic provinces to Charles the Bald.
[132] Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 138.
[133] Eric Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 87-88.
[134] Scholz, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 136-138

provinces.[135] As a result, Louis, with Judith and his other advisors, beseeched Lothar to act as Charles' protector. Lothar agreed, probably at the time of his reconciliation with his father at Worms. Lothar greatly benefitted from the deterioration of the relationship between Louis the Pious and Louis the German, gaining half the kingdom, which was split with Charles the Bald. He would also receive the imperial crown. However, he meaning of and power behind the imperial title had been permanently damaged by the wars of 830-834.

The years since Lothar's coup had proven to be a time of regrouping for Lothar. He spent those four years confined to Italy with little but some north Italian charters to show for his governance there. His relationship with his father progressed slowly as well. We have no record of any formal attempt at reconciliation until 838, and that seems to have been more a result of the dictation of political circumstance. Nevertheless, the Lothar that existed between 835 and 838, inconsequent, no longer existed after the death of his father. With renewed vigor from the new arrangements of 838 and the death of his father in 840, Lothar would again attempt to regain the entire kingdom.

The Frankish Civil War: 840-843

In June of 840, Louis the Pious died. For the next three years, the Carolingian world descended into a degree of internecine conflict that had not been experienced since the Merovingian era. By July, Lothar had made his way to Strasbourg where, according to the *AF*, he received support of many Frankish magnates. Louis had designated Lothar as emperor on his deathbed, and thus these magnates were throwing their lot in with the legitimate heir. However, the *AB* say nothing of the support of magnates for Lothar, but instead report that he was roused by the imperial insignia that had come to him and subsequently set out against his brothers.[136]

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[135] Nelson, *Annals of St-Bertin*, 38-40.
[136] Nelson, *Annals of St. Bertin*, 49.

Nithard, whose account of the events of 840 is quite detailed, reports that Lothar immediately on the death of his father sent emissaries throughout Francia to collect oaths of fealty from its magnates, promising a continuation and enlargement of their benefices.[137] However, Nithard paints these promises as an example of Lothar's supporters' greed.[138]

Nevertheless, it is clear that Lothar was confident even before support had come to him and subsequently emboldened by it. Beginning in July 840, less than a month after his father's death, Lothar started issuing charters from the Frankish heartlands, including the imperial residences of Strasbourg and Mainz. These charters issued to local monasteries and churches demonstrated Lothar's assumption of the imperial authority.[139] However, his brothers were not happy with his audacious move; Louis the German was the first to respond.[140] Fearing that Lothar would take the whole empire for himself, Louis raised forces against him.[141] Nithard and the *AB* claim that Lothar was the first to attack. Whereas, the *AF*, which seem to be offer a less moralizing view than the other two, reports that Louis set out against Lothar first. The discrepancy between the accounts lies in the lack of detail on the part of the annals. The *AF*'s account begins with Lothar and Louis's meeting near Mainz in August of 840, but does not mention Lothar's previous attack on Worms, where Louis had a garrison. It does seem that, seeing the opportunity to deal with his problematic brother, Lothar instigated hostilities. Lothar's reason for attacking his Louis was the result of Louis' proven character. Louis, who had been left Bavaria alone, had proven himself "insolent,"[142] continuously attacking his father

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[137]Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* c. *MGH SSRG.* (1907), 44:13 *Audiens Lodharius patrem suum obisse confestim nuntios ubique, presertim per totam Franciam mittit, qui se venturum in imperium, quod olim fuerat illi datum, affirmant, promittens unicuique honores a patre concessos se concedere et eosdem augere velle.*
[138] Ibid. *Ergo cupiditate terroreque illecti undique ad illum confluent ...*
[139] Lothar continues to use the imperial title in his documents. For examples, see *MGH, DD Kar.*, 147, 155, 165.
[140] Reuter, Timothy, *The Annals of Fulda* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 18.
[141] Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* c. *MGH SSRG.* (1907).
[142] This representation of Louis the German comes from the 840 entry of the Annals of St. Bertin while Louis was attacking his father. It shows that Louis had long been considered uncompromising, a characteristic that is born out

in previous years. Furthermore, the only agreement that Louis would have been open to would have further split the empire, probably taking portions of Lothar's kingdom. Thus, Lothar made no attempt to reconcile with him.

In the immediate months after his father's death, Lothar made little attempt to reconcile with Charles either. According to Nithard, Charles attempted to maintain cordial relations with his brother, but Lothar continuously delayed any agreement. In Nithard's account, Lothar even removed the benefices of Charles's emissaries because they did not join him. However, Nithard offers no names or benefices in the matter. The fact that he, in the same entry, offers the names of those who did defect from Charles as the king took over the Charbonnière makes the Nithard's account here suspect.[143] These types of accusations against Lothar are abundant in Nithard's account, and inaccuracies like the omission above are indicative of his biased view of the events. Nevertheless, if one looks beyond the moral overtones of the work, it becomes clear that Lothar was able to win over many of Charles' supporters between July and November of 840.[144]

During these months, Lothar moved against his brothers, seeking to take the entire empire for himself, and, along the route, magnates like Hilduin, abbot of St. Denis and Gerard, count of Paris, joined with him. These defections, though used by Nithard to highlight Charles' dire situation and subsequent ingenuity in avoiding disaster, perhaps validate the claim of the *AF* that the Franks chose Lothar to take the empire.[145] The possibility that Lothar was gaining support across in the western part of the Empire should not be disregarded, especially in light of these defections. These defections are not necessarily a sign of heart-felt allegiance to Lothar or

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in his repeated rebellions against his father, and is a possible reason Lothar decided to forgo any immediate attempts to come to terms with him.

[143] Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* c. *MGH SSRG.* (1907), 44:16.

[144] Ibid. Nithard continuously bemoans the defections of Charles' supporters.

[145] Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, 18.

some imperial ideal, but are nevertheless indicative of the belief that Lothar had the most legitimate claim to rule as well as the ability to support that claim and thus they were more likely to profit by supporting him. After all any offers or threats that Lothar would have given to ensure the allegiance of magnates would likely have also been given to those individuals by Charles. It was up to the individual to make his choice, and it seems that many sided with emperor.

The fraternal forces soon met outside the city of Orleans where they set up camp. However, no battle was pressed. Despite the increase in Lothar's support, he and Charles the Bald came to terms. Nithard attributes the lack of conflict to Charles' ingenuity and unrelenting spirit in the face of his brother's overwhelming forces.[146] However, he neglects to mention that the terms arranged favored Lothar over Charles. The new terms stripped Charles of Burgundy and a third of his possessions from the inheritance of 838. Nithard also skirts the issue of Louis the German, who was assembling support in the east. After terms, the brothers decided to meet again in May 841 at Attigny,[147] and Lothar quickly turned and pushed east across the Rhine in order to deal with Louis. Lothar won a decisive victory after many of Louis' supporters deserted him on the eve of battle and pushed Louis back into Bavaria. Nithard reports that Lothar believed Louis was finished and so set up Duke Adalbert, previously count of Metz, to quarantine his brother within Bavaria. Meanwhile, Charles had crossed into the Meuse in the middle of the Frankish heartlands, prompting Lothar to once again change his focus towards the west. According to the agreement at Orleans, Charles was to remain on the western side of the Seine until the meeting at Attigny. However, Charles crossed the river in route to meet with Lothar, who apparently wanted Charles to remain in the west until he summoned him. These

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[146] Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* c. *MGH SSRG.* (1907), 44:16-17.
[147] Ibid.

events show Lothar's continual insistence on his authority as emperor. The early years of the Frankish civil war also highlight one of the strategic problems for Lothar, the constant need to deal with enemies on two fronts. Though Lothar had much support, a fact shown in the reports of continual defections to his side, he nevertheless had to split his efforts. Ironically, the geographic position of the coveted Frankish heartlands provided a strategic difficulty for Lothar. The best he could do was to deal with the greatest threat at hand and leave capable men in place to act as buffers for the brother he was not facing at the moment.

Unfortunately for Lothar the capable men he left in charge proved quite incapable or simply unfortunate. While pursuing Louis in April 841, Lothar had left a group of counts, abbots, and bishops to prevent Charles' crossing, a maneuver that at least shows Lothar as a capable strategist. Those left by Lothar had made every possible arrangement for the prevention of Charles' crossing. They had burned every bridge across the Seine, destroyed any boats available, and what more the Seine was flooding its banks, preventing any fording. Charles and his army had no hope of crossing the Seine until by chance they came across wrecked merchant ships. Upon repairing the ships and crossing the Seine, Charles and his army routed Lothar's supporters multiple times according to the *AB*. Though no records exist, it is almost certain that Lothar would have taken the majority of his forces with him to face Louis in the east. He had left behind a seemingly capable force, though its comparison with Charles' force cannot be made, to do just as it had done. There was no accounting for the good fortune that had befallen Charles when trying to cross the Seine.

While dealing with Louis the German, however, it seems that Adalbert, Lothar's leader in the area, was simply inept. After defeating Louis in April 841, Lothar left Adalbert to prevent his departure and collect oaths of fealty from the locals. Adalbert was seemingly the man for the job. He had previously fought against the German during the last years of Louis the Pious'

reign, and Nithard reports that he had a deep hatred for Louis. However, Louis, somewhat astonishingly, was able to rout Adalbert's forces and kill him. The sources provide no details as to how Louis was able to achieve such a victory with only the resources provided by his Bavarian holdings. There is no indication that help from outside Bavaria came to him. Thus, two possibilities are left. Either Lothar left Adalbert with inept numbers or Adalbert proved an incapable leader. If Nithard's assessment that Lothar considered Louis finished is correct, then the former is probably true. It might be unfair to blame Lothar for the disasters near the Seine and in Bavaria. After all, in both situations Lothar had left seemingly capable forces to deal with the problems. Nevertheless Lothar's inability to completely subjugate at least one of his brothers only made matters worse. The longer he oscillated between east and west, the more his brothers found a common interest.

That common interest first united in June 841 at Fontenoy. Following his escape from Bavaria, Louis met with Charles to combine their forces. The three brothers setup camp near the villa at Fontenoy, separated by a marshy forest. The younger brothers demanded that they be given their respective kingdoms as had been willed by their father. Louis' part in these demands is unexpected, considering that he had been disinherited of lands other than Bavaria by the 839 division at Worms. He was obviously demanding his inheritance based on terms before his rebellion in 838. Both brothers desired their inheritance or that new equal shares of the empire be drawn up with Lothar, as the eldest, receiving first choice. Lothar, though delaying for some time, eventually declined to negotiate. The reason for Lothar's refusal is three-fold. First, there was a fundamental difference in perspective among the brothers. Charles and Louis demanded equal shares of the kingdom, an act that would have further undermined not only Lothar's share in the inheritance of 839 but also the imperial ideal that had been established by the *Ordinatio*. Though it can be argued that any such ideal had been effectively tarnished by the various wars

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and redrawing of inheritance during the 830s, Lothar continued to doggedly hold onto his authority as eldest brother and emperor. Second, Lothar appeared to still have superior military numbers and confidence that he could win if war broke out. Finally, the arrival of Pepin II of Aquitaine, Lothar's nephew, appears to have been the main cause of Lothar's refusal to make terms. Pepin had been fighting against Charles the Bald in Aquitaine since Louis the Pious had effectively disinherited his father, Pepin I, by naming Charles the Bald, *rex Aquitaniae*. As a result, the younger Pepin sided with Lothar in June 841. Agnellus of Ravenna briefly discusses Pepin's arrival in his work on George, bishop of Ravenna, who was sent by Pope Gregory to negotiate peace among the brothers. In Agnellus' account, war immediately follows Pepin's arrival. Though Agnellus' brevity may account for the association between Pepin and the start of hostilities, Pepin's arrival was a contributing factor and may have been the deciding one.[148] Hostilities broke out on June 25.

The pitched battle at Fontenoy effectively ended in a stalemate.[149] Though Lothar was routed, both sides suffered severe casualties. The severity of slaughter at Fontenoy is evident in the sources. The *AF* says that "there was such a slaughter on both sides that no one can recall a greater loss among the Frankish people in the present age."[150] Many died and more were wounded according to the *AB*. Agnellus of Ravenna claims that "a considerable amount from Charles' side died" and that "from the side of Lothar and Pepin more than forty thousand men died."[151] Though forty thousand is surely an exaggeration, Agnellus' account reveals the harsh outcome of Fontenoy and, since Agnellus was writing in Italy, shows that news of Fontenoy

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[148] Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, in MGH *SRL* 390. *Sed postquam venit Pipinus, filius Pipini, Lotharii nepos, rex Aquitaniae, cunfortatus exercitus Lotharii, iterum commissum est bellum …*
[149] For a complete breakdown of the events at Fontenoy see Ernst Müller's *Der Schlachtort Fontaneum (Fontanetum) von 841* in *Neues Archiv Gessellschaft* (1908) v. 33.
[150] Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, 19.
[151] Agnellus of Ravenna, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, in MGH *SRL* 390.

travelled great distances. The battle at Fontenoy shows that Lothar still hoped to retain control of the Empire. Furthermore, it reveals that Lothar still had great support or at least enough to refuse negotiations, which he had been willing to have in the past. It simply seems that Lothar was unable to turn the tide against his brothers. Whether this inability was a result of ineptitude as a leader or simply misfortune (evidence for both exists) cannot be fully determined because of the limited evidence concerning the battle. Fontenoy, though severe, did not decide the outcome of the Frankish civil war. Though Fontenoy had brought Charles and Louis together against their brother, the brothers also found themselves often fighting Lothar on different fronts. The unity of his brothers was a problem for Lothar, but having to fight on two fronts was just as problematic. Geography left Lothar indecisive and continually changing course.

Lothar spent the months between June 841 and February 842 raising support and trying to destroy Louis the German's forces. It appears that destroying Louis had been Lothar's strategy from the beginning since he was only willing to negotiate with Charles. Lothar seems to still have had support among the eastern magnates and called them into the fight with Louis. Lothar also attempted to make amends with Charles by offering him everything west of the Seine, excluding Septimania and Aquitaine, if Charles would abandon Louis.[152] Charles refused. The terms Lothar offered cut into a large portion of Charles' 839 inheritance. Nithard claims that Charles was not willing to abandon Louis because he had sworn oaths to his brother. While this reason may have some credence, it is nevertheless true that having Louis as an ally might afford Charles the opportunity to make for better terms with Lothar in the future. The benefits of having Lothar fight on two fronts certainly did not escape Charles' sight. Ultimately, Lothar's failed attempts to come to terms with Charles and to finish off Louis the German, who

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[152] Nithard, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* c. *MGH SSRG.* (1907), 44:33.

had been building support in the East, led to the Oaths of Strasbourg in 842. For Lothar the union formed at Strasbourg was more dangerous than when the brothers had joined forces at Fontenoy. By February 842, the younger brothers had built up considerable forces in their respective areas. Though there are no statistics for Charles and Louis' forces, it is arguable that their numbers had increased considerably since Fontenoy, where they had routed Lothar despite great losses. Nithard no longer bemoans the lack of forces for Charles after the Strasbourg oaths, which he had done with frequency since the beginning of the civil war. Furthermore, the number of charters under Charles the Bald increased, indicating that there was a greater willingness to side with him.

Following the Oaths of Strasbourg, the political situation only worsened for Lothar. After using slash-and-burn tactics in western Francia, Lothar returned to Aachen, where his brothers soon came to confront him in March 842. Though Lothar had enjoyed great support since the beginning of the civil war, for the first time his men began to abandon him now. Lothar suffered defections, prompting him to flee to Troyes, where he regrouped. However, attempts to regroup were not enough. By April, Lothar was reluctantly willing to come to terms at the town of Macon. The brothers decided to have men from all sides survey Francia and redraw new lines of equal inheritance. Though initial attempts were postponed, by March 843, the new kingdoms had been determined, and the brothers made peace with the Treaty of Verdun (See Map 4a).[153] Louis received the eastern portion of the empire from the Rhine, including Speyer, Worms, and Mainz, which had previously belonged to Lothar. Charles received the western portion of the empire from the Rhone down into Spain. Finally, Lothar received everything in between.

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[153] Nithard gives a detailed outline of the negotiations.
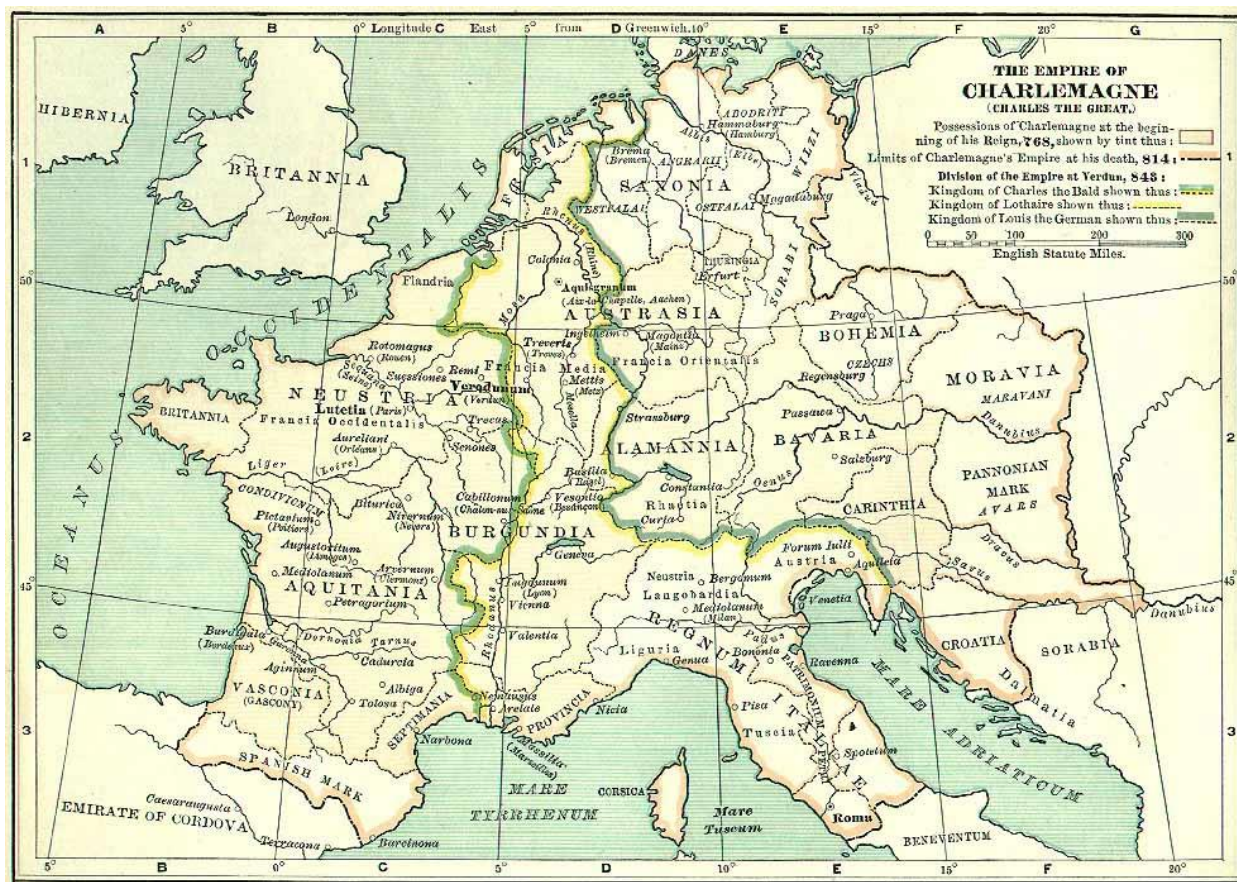
Map 4a – The Carolingian Empire after the Treaty of Verdun (843)

The events of 830-843 are of particular importance to the unity of the Empire. Lothar's defeat in 834 and his capitulation in 842 spelled the end for the idea of a united Carolingian Empire under him. Louis the German and Charles had built up support in their kingdoms, dooming any attempt on Lothar's to seize control of the entire Empire.. The idea of Empire was seriously damaged. Charles the Bald would attempt to reinvigorate it, but any serious attempt to impose control over all of Francia died with Lothar. The warring of 830-843 had pitted many against each other, and Carolingian society returned back to the factionalism and regionalism that had always lain dormant in its core.

Grasping for Empire: 844-855

The years between the Treaty of Verdun and Lothar's death in 855 saw little change in his overall goal concerning his brothers. Lothar probably held onto the hope of restoring the

entire empire under his control. The relationship among the three brothers declined further after Verdun. The brothers continuously attempted to undermine each other's power. For instance, Johannes Fried has claimed that Charles may have used Viking incursions against Lothar as a semi-regnal force.[154] Overall, evidence from Lothar's middle kingdom shows a period of decline following Verdun. There are no capitularies issued by Lothar until 846, a full three years after the end of hostilities, indicating either a lacuna in the documentary evidence or an inability to summon counsel. Numismatic evidence indicates that west Frankish coinage was in greater circulation than coinage from Lothar's realm. Finally, despite his best attempts, Lothar was unable to force a wedge between Louis and Charles, his main objective since the death of Louis the Pious. All of these factors combine to demonstrate Lothar's increasingly desperate position within Francia.

The narrative evidence following 843 provides a much spottier account of Lothar's actions. With the civil war over, the *AF* and *AB* begin to focus much more on their respective patrons, and Nithard's account ended with Verdun. References outside of the two main Frankish sources for this time are even more laconic. Nevertheless, we can piece together a brief outline of the events as well as some detail about the relationship among the. Beginning in 846, Lothar and Charles' relations cooled. The *AF* records that a certain leading man of Charles', Gislebert, kidnapped Lothar's daughter. Between 846 and 849, Lothar and Charles remained at odds. As a result, Lothar and Louis the German became closer, spending a great deal of time together in 847 and 848. At first glance, the narrative account of these events offers little more than bare facts. However, when we consider the narrative, charter, and numismatic evidence alongside

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[154] Johannes Fried has made the point that these forces may have been under direction from Lothar's other brothers and may have acted a Frankish mercenaries.

each other, we can see that despite Lothar's continuous desire to seize the empire, the last years of his reign were a period of decline and failure.

The narrative sources show three signs of decline in Lothar's last years. First, they indicate the rising power of Charles the Bald, a problem for both Lothar and Louis. For instance, the *AB* place emphasis on the cordial relations among the three brothers, an emphasis not found in the *AF*, continuously recording meetings between the brothers, such as that at Meersen to deal with the Danes. Bertin also omits the kidnapping and subsequent marriage of Lothar's daughter. The emphasis on brotherly unity in the *AB* is likely an attempt by Charles' supporters to mask the problems among the brothers, especially the growing estrangement of Louis from Charles. The *AF* do not emphasize the fraternal unity, but rather record the growing connection between Lothar and Louis. This account further indicates that the two brothers, formerly enemies, saw a common interest in supporting each other. If Charles the Bald were no threat to Lothar or Louis, there would have been no cause for the brothers to grow closer nor would there have the *AB* to mask the issues that threatened fraternal unity. Charles was taking it upon himself to protect the bonds of fraternal unity and thus the empire.

The charter evidence also supports the growing power of Charles the Bald. Elina Screen has shown that towards the end of the Frankish civil war, Charles the Bald began issuing more charters than before. Screen argues that this increase was a result of the growing legitimacy of Charles the Bald as many were increasingly willing to put their trust in the youngest brother. Screen further asserts "Years in which few charters were issued may be a sign of political malaise, when the political attraction of the ruler failed, and recipients did not feel it to be worthwhile to resort to him."[155] Thus, charter evidence may provide a better look at the crude

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[155] Elina Screen, "The importance of the emperor: Lothar I and the Frankish civil war, 840-843" in *Early Medieval Europe* v.12, 2003, 32.

favorability of a ruler to examine alongside the narrative sources. When we apply this technique to Charles' reign, we see his increasing power and ability in the west.

Lothar's inability to force hostilities between Louis and Charles was a failure on his part. The annals indicate a growing divide between Louis and Charles, while reporting that Lothar and Louis grew increasingly close. If we examine this information with the fact Lothar likely continued to have aspirations for the empire, then we can see Lothar's new found amiability with Louis as politically favorable for Lothar. After all, Lothar's *modus operandi* during the civil wars had been to keep Louis and Charles apart. The fact that Lothar now sided with a brother toward whom he had been hostile since before their father's death indicates that Lothar was politically flexible for the sake of his ultimate goal; that is reestablishing the empire. Unfortunately for Lothar, he was never able to force his ultimate goal of inciting hostilities between Charles and Louis. The annals record that Louis refused to abandon the Strasbourg Oaths, which he had sworn to Charles during the civil war. Lothar's inability to divide Charles and Louis was the main obstacle in his way to seizing control of the empire. Despite the growing estrangement of Louis from Charles, the brothers never engaged in open hostilities.

Finally, the last years of Lothar's reign were years of constant Viking incursions. Immediately following the civil war, the annals turn to recording the constant onslaught of Viking raids. These raids wreaked havoc on the Carolingian realms. For Lothar, the 847 raid on Dorestead was particularly problematic. Dorestead had been one of the largest emporia in his kingdom. Despite its having been in decline for some time, the raid appears to have been the death knell for the mint there. These raids affected all of Francia, leading the *AF* to report in 854 that the Vikings had "for twenty years continuously … cruelly afflicted with fire and slaughter

and pillage those places on the borders of Francia which were accessible by ship."[156] The fact that the annals provide a specific date to the beginning of the raids indicates that they had a strong impression on the Frankish memory. Their severity is further proven by the fact that Charles, Louis, and Lothar were occasionally forced to face the threat together out of political necessity.

The numismatic evidence from Lothar's reign shows further signs of decline after 843. Despite the general boom of the Carolingian economy in the 820s and 830s,[157] the economy of the Middle Kingdom began to decline. The large mint at Dorestead was raided. However, the raiding of a single mint alone cannot account for the economic problems of the kingdom. Coupland's study of the Middle Kingdom's mints reveals that Lothar's economy was producing coins underweight and in fewer quantities than those produced under Louis the Pious. Lothar's coinage was less circulation than Charles the Bald's with hoards of from the west kingdom found in Middle Francia. Conversely, only a few single finds from Lothar's coinage have been discovered in West Francia.[158] While the causes of this economic decline are not understood, it may indicate that Lothar was not the best administrator, especially when we consider that Charles the Bald reopened nearly twenty mints during the 870s.

The charter evidence from Lothar's reign is a problematic source in that it seems to be an outlier. If we apply Screen's technique of examining charters to the last years (844-855) of Lothar's reign, then we must assume that Lothar enjoyed some political stability in his own realm, where he issued more charters than ever before. During the eleven years Lothar ruled the Middle Kingdom, he issued ninety-four charters at an average of nearly nine per year. That is

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[156] Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, 56.
[157] Simon Coupland, "Carolingian Single Finds and the Economy of the Early Ninth-Century" in *The Numismatic Chronicle* v. 170, 2010, 287.
[158] Simon Coupland, "The Coinage of Lothar I (840-855)" in *The Numismatic Chronicle* v. 161, 2001, 191-193.

over twice as many as he issued during the seventeen years between 823 and his father's death in 840. The only period to see more charters issued occurred during the civil war when Lothar was busily trying to assert his dominance and assure alliances in the Frankish heartlands. This evidence seems to fly in the face of the decline narrative that the other sources purport. However, the charter evidence does support the decline theory from a larger perspective. While Lothar enjoyed relative stability in his realm, he nevertheless was unable to issue charters, and thereby assert his authority, outside of the Middle Kingdom. This fact shows that while the numismatic and narrative evidence show signs of the Middle Kingdom's decline, the charter evidence shows the decline of the Carolingian empire as a whole in that connections and networks were becoming much more localized. Lothar's ability to maintain political networks shows that the effects of the growing power in the west, the Viking incursions, Lothar's inability to create hostilities between his brothers, and the economic decline within Middle Francia had not yet touched Lothar's political connections in his kingdom.

The final years of Lothar's reign show signs of economic and political decline. Though he was able to maintain loyalties within his own kingdom, any realistic chance of Lothar reestablishing himself as the ruler of the Carolingian empire had disappeared. When we examine Lothar's reign following his coup in 833/4, we see a time of political upheaval and shifting. During these years, Lothar had been quarantined to Italy, reconciled with his father, reestablished as emperor, engaged in civil war with his brothers, humbled at the Treaty of Verdun, besieged by Viking raids, and was finally left trying to maintain political stability in his own kingdom. He may not have achieved his ultimate goal, and the signs of economic failure compared with the growing authority of Charles in the West may place Lothar's ability as an administrator into question. Nevertheless, through all of these problems, Lothar remained resilient. Unfortunately, Lothar's realm did not remain resilient after his death. All his sons died

without having a legitimate heir. Through the Treaty of Meersen in 870, Charles the Bald and

Louis the German divided the former territory of their eldest brother among themselves.

CHAPTER V:

CONCLUSION

In 869, following the death of Lothar II, the eldest son of Lothar I, Charles the Bald swept in and had himself crowned king of Lotharingia at Metz. This move was not well-received by Louis the German, who held designs for Lotharingia himself. In order to prevent hostilities, Charles and Louis met in 870 to divide up the northern lands that had once been rulled by their deceased brother. The ensuing Treaty of Meersen (870) divided and subsumed Lotharingia into East and West Francia, despite the fact that Louis II, Lothar's last surviving son and king of Italy, was the rightful heir according to the Treaty of Verdun (843). Five short years later, Louis II died, and Charles effectively took over Italy as well. Thus, the kingdom of Lothar I, the initial heir to the entire Frankish empire, ceased to exist less than half a century after its creation.

The fate of Lothar I's kingdom in many ways presages the fate of the entire Carolingian empire. Following the Treaty of Verdun, which effectively ended any attempt to reestablish himself as emperor, Lothar spent most of his time maintaining the alliances within his own realm. Charles the Bald, on the other hand, expanded his grasp across Francia, especially after Lothar's. Nevertheless, after Charles's death in 877, the Carolingian empire would continue to disintegrate as power became more localized.[159] Imperial authority, which had had no political reality since Verdun, was nevertheless chased after by the Carolingian rulers, who sought to harness its ideological power to legitimize their rule. However, it would never again possess the political authority it had held under Louis the Pious and in the person of Lothar I.

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[159] See Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making, 843-1180* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 1-16.

This thesis has sought to understand how the imperial power and authority of the Carolingians first developed and then ultimately how it declined during the reign of Lothar I. Under Pepin I's reign, we see no attempt by the Carolingians to think in terms of empire. Instead Pepin spent his time trying to establish Carolingian legitimacy and thus unity of the realm through a close alliance with the papacy, the limiting of heirs and constricting of marriage, and the constant reiteration that he was *rex Francorum* in the documentary evidence. In 751 and again in 754, Pepin had himself and his sons crowned and anointed by the Pope. This ceremony not only established a link between the Carolingians and the church, but it also tapped into the spiritual legitimacy of ancient Israel and king David. The alliance with the papacy shows clearly in the documentary evidence as formulaic documentary embellishments of a religious nature, such as *dei gratia*, emerge towards the end of Pepin's reign.

It is under Pepin that we also see the constricting of marriage. Under him, men are made just as accountable as women for the crime of adultery, and clandestine marriages are outlawed. Both of these capitula were intended to control and limit noble marriages and thus the number of potential heirs to any piece of land. Pepin's own life, which included a lifelong seemingly monogamous marriage and produced two legitimate heirs, showed the effects of applying stricter marital mores. It is during the reign of Pepin that we also see the law of consanguinity expanded to include up to the seventh generation, a severe expansion of law compared to the Merovingian version. The attempts during Pepin's reign to restrict marriage and the pool of heirs not only reduced the problems from multiple heirs and marriages, but it also further allied the Carolingians with the papacy and church.

Finally, the reign of Pepin I, saw the constant reiteration of the royal authority. Rather than continue to dispute the legitimacy of the Merovingians in the face of Merovingian supporters, the Carolingians tapped into the ancient power of their title, *rex Francorum*. For the

Carolingians, it was important to emphasize that their coup d'état represented not a disruption of the Frankish line, but a continuation of the Frankish power under new rulers, who could not only hold the title in name but also in political power. Towards the end of Pepin's reign, the charters began to include invocations of divine power. The phrase, *dei gratia*, expressed that the Carolingians were divinely ordained.

The first half of the reign of Charlemagne continued many of the policies of his father's reign. Charlemagne further restricted marriage and issued harsher punishments for adulterers. He continued to use the royal title in his charters and capitularies, though with increasing embellishments invoking divine authority. Finally, the Franco-papal alliance grew stronger during his reign. However, the introduction of new peoples into the Frankish realm and the alliance with the church brought about changes in the Carolingians' political perspective. With introduction of new peoples, older titles, such as *rex Francorum*, were less applicable in newer territories, where the inhabitants were not ethnically Frankish. Furthermore, the church's emphasis on unity and the idea of a Christian people doubtless affected Carolingian understandings concerning their rule.

Charlemagne expanded his father's capitularies on marriage and adultery. He dismissed adultery as a viable reason for divorce. Moreover, he added confiscation of property to the punishment for adultery. In his own dealings with his eldest son, Pepin the Hunchback, who was the product of one of Charlemagne's concubines, the constriction of the pool of heirs is clear. Pepin was given no land, and in response attempted a coup against his father, which Charlemagne quickly quelled. The fact that the eldest son of the Frankish king received no land represented a serious break from the Merovingian past. The continued implementation and strengthening of marital laws and practices concerning heirs furthered the Franco-papal alliance under Charlemagne.

In the documentary evidence of Charlemagne's reign, we see a greater amount of religious terminology. In many charters, Carolingian scribes included phrases, like *devotus sanctae aeclessiae defensor*. with the king's list of epithets. Increasingly, the Carolingians saw themselves as patrons of the church and guardians of its doctrine. As we saw in chapter one, in the 780s and 790s, the Carolingians inserted themselves into doctrinal debates with the Byzantine Empire. Charlemagne's court wrote the *Libri Carolini* to respond to the Second Council of Nicaea's decisions regarding religious icons, and again at the Synod of Frankfurt in 794, the council's decisions were condemned. Whether the Carolingians held real convictions concerning their hostility towards the Byzantine council is immaterial. What does matter is that the Carolingian response was a part of the Carolingian attempt to gain control over the church and papacy.

During Charlemagne's reign, Carolingian expansion accelerated at an unprecedented rate. In 768, the Carolingians subdued the Aquitanians. In the 770s and 780s, parts of southern France and northern Spain as well as the kingdom of the Lombards were added. In 799, the Franks conquered the Avars and added territory and a great amount of spoils into the Carolingian kingdom. However, the expansion brought the Carolingians into contact with peoples who had differing cultures, languages, and law codes. Frankish titles did not hold the same force for these new peoples as they would have held for those who considered themselves Franks. It is this problem and the strengthened alliance with the church that drove the Carolingian push for unity and stability and transformed the Carolingian political perspective.

Under Charlemagne, the push for unity was characterized by the production of programmatic capitularies at the end of the 780s and into the 790s, the use of royal agents, the introduction of new political titles into charters and capitularies, and finally a strengthening of the economy through trade expansion and standardization of coinage. In the documentary

evidence of Charlemagne's later reign (789-814), we see the inclusion of titles such as *rex Langobardorum* and *patricius Romanorum*. In the case of the Lombard title, the Carolingians sought to tap into the legitimacy of this ancient people in the same way they used *rex Francorum patricius Romanorum*. Increasingly the Carolingians saw themselves as rulers of a Christian realm with a righteous king, in the same fashion as king David and Constantine, as the head of the realm.

As the rulers of a Christian kingdom, it was the responsibility of the Carolingians to ensure its stability and unity. During the 780s and 790s, Charlemagne attempted to provide unity and stability by concentrating power into royal hands. It is during this time that he presided over the *Admonitio Generalis*, the Synod of Frankfurt, the *Capitulare de Villis*, and many other capitularies aimed at the emendation of laws, ordering of the royal household, standardization of coinage, and the implementation of ecclesiastical law. Charlemagne also began using royal agents called the *missi dominici* who ensured compliance with the law on a local level. As far as the effectiveness of the capitularies is concerned, it is promising that the standardization of coinage was effective, making it a possibility that other capitularies would have had the desired effect.

Carolingian attempts to consolidate power and create lasting unity received a great boost in December 800. Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor in Rome. The coronation of Charlemagne seems a logical culmination of the Franco-papal alliance, and gave the Carolingians the terminology to express their identity as rulers of a vast realm with disparate peoples and regions. Through the ideological power of the imperial authority, the Carolingians could better assert themselves as rulers of Western Europe. They were no longer mere kings, but now emperors ever a Christian people. The effects of the imperial crown are clearly seen in Charlemagne's reissue of the pre-800 programmatic capitularies. This time the capitularies bore

the power of the imperial title. Still older titles persisted in the documents of Charlemagne's reign. Perhaps the older epithets lent the new one the needed legitimacy in the Carolingian realm, where magnates would have recognized the well-established titles. Thus, the reign of Charlemagne appears to be a period of transition from *rex Francorum* to *imperator augustus* with the imperial authority not yet strong enough to stand on its own.

The reign of Louis the Pious, however, birthed a drastic break with the past. Unlike his father, Louis embraced the imperial authority alone. In the documentary evidence of Louis' reign, the imperial authority makes a continual appearance first and foremost. Furthermore, powerful regions, such as Aquitaine, Italy, and Bavaria, are listed as *pars*, or regions. In previous Carolingian documents, these regions were not listed at all, but now they served as part of an empire. The Franks abandoned the older titles of *rex Francorum* and *rex Langobardorum*. Therefore, the imperial authority was the sole power that Louis emphasized. That authority was expanded with Louis' implementation of the *Ordinatio Imperii* in 817 through which Lothar received the imperial authority as co-emperor as well as a majority of the Frankish empire. The *Ordinatio* made manifest the theoretical power of the imperial crown. Now, the title came with actual political impact. Finally, the acceptance of the *Ordinatio* represented the strength of what the Carolingians had built. The document's serious break with Frankish tradition could not be and was not openly opposed, signifying that the Carolingians had built up immense power; part of which was the product of their emphasis on their imperial authority.

Despite the strides the Carolingians made in building their imperial power during the first two decades of the ninth century, the decades between 817 and 843 would see that power torn apart. The issue of how the Carolingian empire fell apart is not a new one. Scholars like Timothy Reuter have offered possible solutions, such as the halt of Carolingian military expansion, that resulted in the cessation of spoils and greater internal tensions. Moreover,

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solutions to this problem take a larger perspective and generally ignore the role of Lothar. However, as this thesis has argued, not including Lothar's role in the narrative of Carolingian decline is to seriously misrepresent the situation. By looking at Lothar, we are able to see circumstances that are necessarily glossed over in the macro view proffered by scholars like Reuter.

The first half of reign of Lothar (817-834) saw a drastic swing in fortune for the young co-emperor. In 817, Louis the Pious made Lothar his co-emperor and successor. However, by 834, Lothar was no longer co-emperor and Louis had abandoned the *Ordinatio*. For the most part the years between 817 and 828 were quiet and the imperial authority of Lothar was intact. However, the birth of Charles the Bald in 823 caused tensions between Louis and his sons. Louis struggled with the issue of giving his youngest son land, especially now that the *Ordinatio* was eleven years old and well-established. Louis' issue probably stemmed from his genuine desire to give to his son as well as from the bidding of this wife, Judith of Bavaria, whose family represented a powerful faction. In any case, Louis decided to break the terms of the *Ordinatio* and give land to Charles out of Lothar's portion. Lothar's anger to this break was appeased by Louis designating him godfather of Charles, a position Lothar could use to his advantage.

Ultimately, Lothar's decisions to revolt in 828 and again in 833 were in reaction to aggressive actions of his father. Giving land to Charles was a problem for Lothar, but one that was overcome by Lothar's position as Charles godfather. As godfather, Lothar could steer Charles in the direction he desired and create a lasting bond between them that could have proven useful for the emperor. However, following the successful siege of Barcelona, two events forced Lothar in a precarious position. First, his main ally and father-in-law, Hugh of St. Tours was stripped of all his lands by Louis the Pious. Second, Louis made Bernard of

Septimania the godfather of Louis, which ruptured the political and spiritual bonds between Lothar and Charles. Through both of these actions, Lothar saw his power diminishing. As a result, Lothar rebelled twice. While the first rebellion in 828 was quickly put down, the second in 833 resulted in a nearly two-year stint as sole emperor.

The initial success of Lothar's coup in 833 owed much to his ability to gather support. Some of the support Lothar enjoyed was the outcome of older hostilities between magnates and Louis the Pious. For instance, Hugh of St. Tours and Manfred of Orleans both urged Lothar to rebel because of their lost territories. However, Lothar gained considerable support simply because of his position as co-emperor. Lothar, as a theoretical equal to his father by virtue of the *Ordinatio*, which Louis himself had commissioned, could claim the authority to seize the empire for himself. In addition, given Louis' recent aggressive actions in giving Charles land and taking land from prominent vassals, the fact that Lothar's actions represented filial disloyalty could be overlooked. The grievances submitted to Louis at the Field of Lies in 833 called Louis directly out for causing issues that resulted in his deposition. Finally, the fact that the papacy, which had been instrumental in establishing the imperial power of the Carolingians, supported Lothar lent greater legitimacy to his actions.

Despite his immense support in 833, Lothar lost control of the empire by 834. Louis the Pious, angered by his son's rebellion, dismissed the *Ordinatio* and divided the empire equally among all his sons in the same fashion as the *Divisio Regnorum* of 806. However, the imperial authority would reemerge in Lothar's later reign, a sure sign of its strength and Louis' commitment to it. But the events between 817 and 834 had tarnished the imperial power. These events were largely perpetuated by Louis the Pious' aggressive actions and were not the result a son, who was hell-bent on seizing the empire for himself. Rather Lothar appears to have been

pushed into rebellion as a logical step to counter Louis.. Nevertheless, the second half of Lothar's reign would see the destruction of the Carolingian empire.

Lothar spent the years between 834 and 838 isolated in Italy. He mostly sought to maintain alliances with northern-Italian monasteries and also refused to reinstitute his father's *fideles* into their pre-coup positions. Lothar declined to meet with his father several times. By 838, however, political circumstances brought about a full reconciliation between father and son. Louis the German had rebelled and forced Louis to redraw the lines of inheritance again. This time Lothar and Charles would each receive half the empire, and Lothar was once again crowned emperor. The imperial authority showed great resiliency during the 830s despite the constant warfare and problems. That resiliency clearly appears in Lothar's ability to gather again immense support during the Frankish civil war.

Lothar's attempts to seize the empire for himself were the proximate cause of the Frankish Civil War. Louis the German had little claim to a large part of the empire. However, Charles the Bald could argue based on the 838 inheritance division that he ruled half the empire. Lotha produced charters at an unprecedented rate during the early days following Louis the Pious' demise. The younger emperor was trying to quickly establish roots and support in the Frankish heartlands in preparation for an assault on his brothers. Instead he was unable to subdue either. Lothar's inability to conquer and quarantine at least one of his brothers, which would have been necessary to alleviate his strategically-problematic position of being wedged between them, led to the coalescing of his brothers' armies at Fontenoy (841). Though Fontenoy did not prove completely disastrous for Lothar, he was never able to gain an upper hand in the conflict with his brothers. Though in some respect, it would seem obvious that Lothar's failure was of his own making, much of Lothar's inability to seize the empire stemmed from unfortunate circumstances, such as Louis the German's mysterious escape from quarantine in

Bavaria and Charles the Bald's fortunate discovery of wrecked merchant ships. Lothar begrudgingly came to terms with his brothers at Verdun in 843. The Treaty of Verdun would effectively end the empire. Never again would there be a sole ruler of the Carolingian realm. Charles the Bald was able to carve out a good piece of the previous empire by 875, including Italy and Lotharingia. However, his failure at the Battle of Adernach (876) prevented the seizure of east Francia from Louis the German's son, Louis II, and upon Charles' death, the realm descended into further factionalism and localized power. Thus, Charles the Bald was a Carolingian Justinian, being nearly able to resurrect the old empire, but whose accomplishments quickly faded away.

The ultimate failure of the Carolingian imperial authority was not predetermined. Argument such as those of Reuter can often make it seem that the empire was doomed to fail. In Reuter's case, he argued that since the Carolingian empire was built upon the spoils of war, when those spoils ceased, so did the empire. However, the imperial authority of the Carolingians showed great resiliency and persistence during the tumultuous years between 817 and 843. Furthermore, the disintegration of the empire occurred over forty years after the last major conquests of the Carolingian emperors, that is, the conquest of the Avars in 799 and the Saxons in 802. Both of these points clearly show that the imperial authority that the Carolingians forged in the late eighth century and realized in the early ninth was strong rather than weak. The Carolingians were able to wield that authority as an effective political tool, such as when Lothar was constantly able to gather support to his side. That authority ultimately failed because of a series of extenuating circumstances during the reign of an oft-overlooked figure in Carolingian history.

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